

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 132 712

EA 009 005

AUTHOR Stevens, Richard
TITLE Communicating with the Public: A Two-Way Communications Model.
PUB DATE Oct 76
NOTE 206p.; Maxi II Practicum submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, Nova University
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$11.37 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Community Attitudes; *Continuation High Schools; Models; Parent Attitudes; *Program Descriptions; Program Evaluation; *Public Relations; Questionnaires; *School Community Relationship; School Surveys; Senior High Schools; Student Opinion
IDENTIFIERS *Walnut Valley Unified School District CA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to develop, implement, and evaluate a two-way communication program for Del Paso High School. The overall goal was to create an ever-increasing circle of people well informed about the school--an ambiance, an environment of knowledge and understanding. Relying on the experience and examples of other administrators functioning in a similar situation--a continuation high school--a program of internal and external communication was developed, implemented, and evaluated. Dissemination of the model and concepts involved has occurred through a mimeographed book distributed to all continuation high school administrators in the state of California. (Author/IRT)

* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *

ED132712

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC:
A TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

by Richard Stevens

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education, Nova University

Los Angeles Cluster
Jack Jones, Ed.D., Coordinator

Maxi II Practicum
October, 1976

EA 009 005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	(1)
CHAPTER ONE - "TO COMMUNICATE OR NOT TO COMMUNICATE"	
Introduction.....	1
The Public Image of Education.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Conceptualized Solution.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	9
Organization of the Practicum Report.....	13
CHAPTER TWO - A COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK	
Introduction.....	16
The Basic Framework.....	17
Establishing Objectives.....	17
Adoption of a Framework.....	19
Adapting the Framework: Del Paso High School.....	24
Prioritizing the Publics.....	24
Prioritizing the Methods.....	29
Summary.....	33
CHAPTER THREE - INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS SCHOOL	
Introduction.....	35

Student Perception of the School.....	37
Student School Attitude-Survey.....	39
Messages to be Communicated...f.....	47
Objectives of the Communication Efforts.....	49
Methods of Communication.....	50
Individual, face-to-face.....	50
Notes to Students.....	52
Progress Reports.....	53
Advisory Group.....	58
Small Group Meetings.....	60
Student Bulletins.....	62
Evaluation of Communication Efforts With Students.....	63
Obtaining Evaluation Data.....	64
Results of Follow-up Survey.....	64
Evaluation of the Methods of Communication.....	81
Individual, face-to-face.....	81
Notes to Students.....	82
Progress Reports.....	84
Advisory Group.....	85
Small Group Meetings.....	86
Student Bulletins.....	87
Summary.....	87

CHAPTER FOUR - INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

Introduction.....	90
Internal -- System: Other Schools/ Staff in the District.....	92
Methods of Communication.....	94
Individual, Face-to-Face.....	94
Newsletters.....	97
Appearance of Building.....	98
Student Volunteers.....	99
Brochures.....	99
Evaluation of Communication Efforts: Internal -- System: Other Schools/ Staff in the District.....	100
Evaluation of the Methods of Communication.....	101
Individual, Face-to-Face.....	101
Newsletters.....	102
Appearance of Building.....	103
Student Volunteers.....	104
Brochures.....	105
Internal -- System: Other Administrators (Comprehensive High School).....	106
Methods of Communication.....	106
Individual, Face-to-Face.....	107
Newsletters.....	108

Evaluation of Communication Efforts:	
Internal -- System: Other Adminis-	
trators (Comprehensive High School).....	108
Summary.....	110

CHAPTER FIVE -- EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS PARENTS

Introduction.....	111
Parent Perceptions of the School.....	112
Results of Questionnaire.....	112
Messages to be Communicated.....	117
Objectives of Communication Efforts...	118
Methods of Communication.....	119
Individual, Face-to-Face.....	119
Attitude of Students.....	120
Parent Conferences.....	121
Intake Interview.....	122
Progress Reports.....	123
Newsletters.....	124
Telephone.....	125
Telephone Manners.....	126
Telephone Conferences.....	127
Invitations.....	127
Attendance.....	128
Advisory Groups.....	129

Open House/Back-to-School Nights.....	132
Brochures/Reports.....	135
Student Publications.....	135
Letters.....	136
Appearance of Building.....	137
Media.....	138
Evaluation of Communication Efforts With Parents.....	138
Obtaining Evaluation Data.....	139
Results of the Communication Effort...	140
Evaluation of the Methods of Communication.....	146
Individual, Face-to-Face.....	146
Progress Reports.....	147
Newsletters.....	149
Telephone.....	151
Advisory Groups.....	152
Open House/Back-to-School Nights.....	152
Other Methods of Communication.....	154
Summary.....	155
CHAPTER SIX - COMMUNICATIONS WITH OTHER PUBLICS	
Introduction.....	156

Radio Program - KGBS.....	157
Christmas Party at Pacific State Hospital.....	159
Art Sales.....	160
Summary.....	161
CHAPTER SEVEN - DISSEMINATION OF THE MODEL: COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES HANDBOOK	
Introduction.....	162
Verification of Assumptions.....	163
Dissemination Procedure.....	168
Evaluation.....	169
Factors Requiring Alteration of Evaluation Techniques.....	169
Establishment of a "Panel of Experts".....	169
Evaluation of "Communication Techniques".....	171
Summary.....	174
CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSION	
Introduction.....	176
Process Review.....	178
Improvement in the Educational System.....	181
Short-Term Change.....	181
Parent and Student Attitudes.....	182
Class Schedule.....	183

Activity Schedule.....	184
Staff Committment.....	185
Long-Term Change.....	186
Further Applications of the Program.....	187
Observers of the Practicum.....	188
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	194

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to develop, implement, and evaluate a two-way communication program for Del Paso High School, Walnut Valley Unified School District, Walnut, California. The overall goal was to create an ever increasing circle of people well informed about the school -- an ambiance, an environment of knowledge and understanding.

Relying upon the experience and examples of other administrators functioning in a similar situation -- a continuation high school -- a program of communications was developed, implemented, and evaluated. Dissemination of the model and concepts involved has occurred through a mimeographed book distributed to all continuation high school administrators in the state of California.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC;
A TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

by Richard Stevens¹

Chapter One

"TO COMMUNICATE OR NOT TO COMMUNICATE"

INTRODUCTION

When the public has confidence in the schools, support follows. Where doubt exists as to the effectiveness of the program, bond issues and budget approvals frequently go down to resounding defeats. Barometric readings of these phenomena have been taken from time to time and the results are most revealing. There is a crisis of public confidence in the nation's schools.

¹The author is principal of Del Paso High School, a continuation high school in the Walnut Valley Unified School District, Walnut, California.

THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF EDUCATION

The fifth annual Gallup Poll of public attitudes toward education (May 11, 1973) shows a good deal of citizen support for education, but it also reveals a continuing lack of confidence. When the sample of 1,627 adults was asked whether their attitudes had changed toward the schools in recent years, 36% stated that they regarded the schools less favorably.² The 1974 and 1975 surveys included a question which would provide a base for future comparisons. This question was asked:

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and FAIL to denote the quality of their work . . . What grade would you give the public schools here -- A, B, C, D, or FAIL?³

During the year, a significant decline was registered in the number of persons giving the schools a grade of A -- from 18% in 1974 to 13% in 1975. The two bellweather groups -- college educated and young adults -- gave the public schools the lowest ratings.

²California School Boards, Volume 33, No. 5 (May, 1974), p. 4.

³George H. Gallup, "Public Attitudes Toward Education," The Education Digest, Volume LXI, No. 7 (March, 1976), p.3.

In 1974, 40% of the 18-29 age group gave the public schools an A or B; in 1975, only 32% gave the schools an A or B. In 1974, 51% of those who attended college gave the schools an A or B; in 1975, only 43% gave this rating. In 1975, 41% of those who attended college gave the schools a C or D, compared to 29% in 1974.⁴

In California, the Field Research Corporation's most recent statewide survey found that the level of confidence has declined further from low levels found in a similar survey conducted in 1973. In 1973, the public schools ranked 14th from the top among the nineteen entities tested. The 1975 poll shows the public schools slipping to 20th out of 21.⁵

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As U.S. Commissioner of Education Sidney Marland has stated: "'Public confidence in public education must be restored. School officials must tell what's good and what's bad in the schools.'"⁶

⁴Ibid.

⁵Education Update, Public Information Office, Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools (July 3, 1975).

⁶Donald Bagin, Frank Grazian, and Charles H. Harrison, School Communications: Ideas That Work (Chicago: Nation's Schools Press, 1972), p. v.

Pollster George Gallup, as a result of his research survey findings, concludes that an information program which gives the public a better idea of what schools are doing and are trying to do should have an important impact on public views. "The more respondents know at firsthand about the public schools, the more favorable are their views, the less interested and well informed, the less favorable."⁷

Too many administrators have attempted to hide problems -- hoping they would go away before the public discovered them. This approach might have worked yesterday when people believed that school officials possessed a special sort of omniscience. It isn't working in most places today. It won't work anywhere tomorrow.

People, feeling they are shareholders in the schools, are seeking a greater voice. They have entrusted their two prize possessions -- their children and their money -- to school officials, and they want to know what is being done with them.

⁷California School Boards, loc. cit..

To effect a sound understanding -- a believability -- the ". . . astute educator must develop a solid communications system in his district. He must always be sure that he knows what the community is thinking and he must let the community know his thoughts. He must also establish two-way communication with his staff and students."⁸

These tasks are formidable, especially because most school administrators feel uncomfortable with the responsibility of communicating. They place communications and public relations near the end of the job description and often spend their time doing just about anything else. "Study after study has shown that most school administrators feel inadequate when it comes to communicating with the public."⁹

Because few administrators have confidence in their ability to communicate, few schools have a planned communications program. Most districts are guilty of tokenism when it comes to communicating with the people whose support is necessary to assure the success of the public school system. Some districts

⁸Bagin, op. cit., pp. v-vi.

⁹Bagin, op. cit., p. vi.

send out news releases and issue a newsletter. Then they rest easy, content that they have communicated. But they have not -- as district after district is learning in crisis after crisis.

Worse than districts that practice tokenism are those that do nothing to communicate. These latter naively assume that the public will support the schools simply because the schools exist. Schools must gain support through good performance and solid communications efforts.

Continuation high schools have often received the brunt of the public's prejudices and frustrations. The image of the continuation high school has been that of a "haven for juvenile delinquents or social drop-outs."¹⁰ Yet if we pause to take a careful, soul-searching look at continuation education, we can say that little has been done by these schools to communicate with their communities or combat this stereotype.

¹⁰Questionnaire, administered by Richard E. Stevens. The overwhelming response characterized the continuation program in a similar manner. This response is from the questionnaire answered by the school counselor, La Vista High School (Continuation), Fullerton Union High School District, Fullerton, California.

As Past-President of District VII (Los Angeles County) California Continuation Education Association, a member of the California Continuation Education State Advisory Committee, state Treasurer of the California Continuation Education Association, and a representative to the Council of District Representatives, the author has had the opportunity to listen to continuation educators discussing the need to improve the stereotype of the program and of their particular schools.

In response to a questionnaire developed by the author, 68.2% (71) of the respondents (104) indicated that their schools did not have a "... . planned, ongoing program of public relations."¹¹ Only 4.8% (5) felt that the continuation education program in their district would not benefit by a planned program of public relations, while 74.3% (77) felt that benefits would be derived.¹²

CONCEPTUALIZED SOLUTION

This practicum perceives two solutions:

¹¹Questionnaire, see Appendix, Exhibit A.

¹²Ibid.

1. the development, implementation, and institutionalization of a communications program at Del Paso High School (Continuation).
2. the dissemination of the model and communication techniques to other, similar high schools in the state of California.

The principal must take the lead in establishing the communications climate, an atmosphere in which there is a sincere interchange among the various publics. He is the communications leader -- utilizing available talent, resources, and facilities. If a public communications consciousness and sensitivity are to permeate any school, they must begin with the principal. But mere good intentions mean nothing. The principal must have a plan to meet the special communication needs and problems of his own school community.

The concept that this practicum could have significant impact on other, similar schools is well accepted. Eighty-one and seven tenths percent (85) of the respondents to the questionnaire felt that the concept this practicum addresses would benefit continuation education. Only 2.8% (3) felt that the concept would not be beneficial.¹²

¹²Ibid.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Paul Garrett, when president of General Motors, said that public relations begins when management policies are adopted or revised in the interests of the personnel and the stockholders of the company.¹⁴ "Stockholders," for our use, can be defined as the many publics that make up and are concerned with the school district.

Garrett capsulized several attempts at a definition of public relations. For example:

Public relations . . . is merely human decency which flows from a heart good, genial and sturdy enough to be reflected in deeds that are admirable and praise-worthy.

Public relations is statemanship. It's the effect produced by the sum total of an organization's contacts with its publics in any and every form.

Public relations is the name we apply to the policies and acts of an organization as they touch the public and either build or destroy

¹⁴Dorothy E. Dubia, "Developing Goals, Planning, and Implementing a Positive PR Program," Thrust (Burlingame, California: Association of California School Administrators, 1973), Volume 3, No. 1 (October, 1973), p. 5.

good will. It is really, the administrative or operating philosophy of the organization.¹⁵

The concept of public relations as used in this work follows that of Dorothy E. Dubia, Public Information Officer of the ABC School District, California. She defines public relations as:

. . . the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest in mind and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.¹⁶

While there are many facets to the ever-present public relations program there is one area over which a degree of control can regularly be exerted. That area is communications.

Communications is the soul of a positive public relations program. How can the public interest be served if the public interest is not known? How can a program to earn public understanding and acceptance be executed if those areas that will create an aura

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

of good will are ignored or are not known? How, finally, can this public understanding and goodwill be guaranteed on the basis of programs if the public is not aware of them?

Only with communications can we bridge the gap between what is actually happening in the schools and what everyone thinks is happening.

A good communications system is:

A two-way system. Not only do school officials inform, but they are kept informed. Not only do they state opinions and express needs, but they listen to the opinions and desires of others.

For all people. The audience is not just teachers, not just parents, not just community leaders. The audience is everybody, including students.

Continuous. The good school communications system does not operate only before tax levies, only in quarterly newsletters, only when the news media will print articles about the system. District officials should be consciously operating their two-way communications system every day of the year, even though the same things don't necessarily happen every day.¹⁷

Before an attempt to communicate any piece of information is made, it must be determined with whom

¹⁷Bagin, op. cit., p. 2. Italics added.

the communication will be maintained. There is no one, all inclusive "public." There are several publics, each one determined by special interests and needs.

Basically, a communications program can be organized on the basis of "internal" and "external" publics. Internal publics may be identified as students, teachers, administrators, non-teachers, the central administration, other schools in the district, feeder schools, and colleges and universities. External publics might include alumni, parents, community leaders, taxpayers, business leaders, professional people, civic and service groups, and the news media.

Two-way lines of communication -- often different types of "lines" -- must be established with these publics, and the messages tailored to meet their needs. It is impossible to communicate to all publics with one message through one medium.

Robert Olds, West Coast Vice President of the School Management Institute in Santa Barbara, California, suggests the enormous communications task of a secondary school. For a school of 2,000 students in an area

of medium population density, an audience (public) inventory, he suggests, might look something like this:

- 160 Staff
- 3,000 Parents
- 25,000 Citizens in attendance area,
- 250 Community agencies, groups, churches
- 100 University and other post-high school institutions.
- 200 Local employers
- 2,000 Students
- 5,000 Alumni
- 4,000 Students in feeder schools¹⁸

It's easy to count a total of 35,000 to 45,000 persons. These audiences are not only sizeable; they also have diverse, even conflicting, interests in the school.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PRACTICUM REPORT

That communications -- two-way communications -- is an area that requires the attention of school districts and individual schools is documented in this chapter. The problem has been identified and a conceptualized solution offered. The remainder of

¹⁸Robert Olds, "The Principal's PR Role," NASSP Bulletin (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1974), Volume 58, No. 378 (January, 1974), p. 18.

this report explicates a model which can be adopted and adapted by districts and schools.

Chapter II outlines the framework -- the identification of the numerous internal and external publics; the methods to be utilized; the messages to be communicated; the methods of obtaining feedback and involvement; and the methods of evaluation. A method of adapting this framework to the individual district or school is explained using, as an example, the methodology employed by the staff of Del Paso High School.

Chapter III discusses the communication efforts with an internal public -- students -- at Del Paso High School. A method of identifying communication needs and messages is suggested. Methods of communication utilized are discussed. The total effort with that public is then evaluated as are the individual, specific methods of communication. Chapter IV and V follow the same format, each involving a different internal or external public.

Recognizing that one cannot communicate with all publics with equal vigor and success, major emphasis in this practicum was concentrated on selected publics.

However, other publics cannot and were not ignored. Chapter VI outlines some of the communication efforts made with the broader range of publics.

A practicum is a project that addresses itself to a specific problem that confronts a practitioner who is anxious to deal with the problem realistically and resolve it constructively. Hopefully, in performing the practicum the practitioner will contribute toward the advancement of his profession. In order to contribute, the practitioner must disseminate the concepts and solutions perceived. Chapter VII details the author's attempts to provide aid to other continuation high school administrators in developing a communications program in their district and school. Evaluation of the dissemination device and its effectiveness is offered.

Chapter VIII concludes this report. The practicum is reviewed, improvement in the educational system noted, recommendations for improvement in the communications program made, and further applications are suggested.

Chapter Two

A COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

If schools are to receive adequate support in a day and age of increasingly serious building, program, and financing problems, a positive communications program is imperative. Educators must give the public a better idea of what each school is doing, or is trying to do. The question as to whether or not we can afford a viable communications program is not at issue. The key question is: "Can we afford not to go forward with an effective communications program?"

Before attempting to communicate any piece of information, it is necessary to analyze with whom it is one wishes to communicate, the methods of communication, the messages to be communicated, and how to

obtain feedback on and evaluate the communication efforts. This chapter details a framework for communication and describes a methodology for adapting that framework to the needs of the individual district or school.

THE BASIC FRAMEWORK

At the end of the 1974-1975 school year, it became evident that the staff of Del Paso High School desired an improved communications program.

Establishing Objectives:

On the final day of the 1974-1975 school year, the staff met to review the year's accomplishments and identify areas of concern. It was suggested by the author that the list of concerns could become a means of establishing objectives for the following school year.

During the three hour meeting, a great number of accomplishments and concerns were listed by the participants. Turning attention to the concerns, it was decided, following the suggestion of the author, to

prioritize the concerns in order to identify those problems of most significance to the school. The "Delphi" technique of prioritization was used. The "Delphi" technique provides for more information given to each participant as to how others view each item to be rated. By rating via a paper-and-pencil process, time is provided for individual thought. This process also negates the possibility that a very vocal person, or one who is considered to be authoritative, can unduly influence a group.

The concerns were listed and each staff member was given a copy of the list. They were asked to rate each concern on the basis of need for improvement. While the results of the prioritization efforts were being tabulated, the staff discussed the number of problems to attempt to solve. It was decided to choose three problems to concentrate on for the 1975-1976 school year.

Upon completion of the tabulation, the forms were returned to the participants with the total and average score noted. With this information, the staff was asked to prioritize the items a second time.

The final tabulation demonstrated a consensus on the part of the participants. Through this process, three problems were identified, one of which was the area of public relations/communications.

During orientation week of the 1975-1976 school year, the staff met as a committee-of-the-whole to discuss the methods to be used in ameliorating the concern and to establish specific objectives. The author assumed chairmanship of the committee and adopted the problem as the topic for his Maxi II Practicum for Nova University. The committee formulated and adopted an objective and a time-line of activities for accomplishing the objective (See Appendix, Exhibit B). The objective chosen was,

By June 1, 1976, have increased the communities awareness of, understanding of, and confidence in the educational program of Del Paso High School.

Adoption of a Framework:

The author surveyed the literature on public relations and communications. Kenneth J. Gelms, Supervisor for Information for Beverly Hills Unified

School District, Beverly Hills, California, suggests that "... a communications program can be organized on the basis of 'internal' and 'external' publics."¹⁹ A framework was located that followed the concepts of Gelms. The framework was the result of a workshop on public relations attended by school administrators in the Dallas Independent School District. During this 1970 workshop, the participants discussed the basic steps involved in improving school communications efforts. The framework they developed was adopted by the staff of Del Paso High School.

The framework was presented to the staff at a regularly scheduled staff meeting. Discussion revolved around the adequacy of the framework in identifying the essentials of a communications program. Recognizing that frameworks are neither right nor wrong, but that some are better than others, the staff reached a consensus that this framework was satisfactory.

The framework: (1) identifies the many "publics"

¹⁹Kenneth J. Gelms, "Gearing Up for Effective PR," NASSP Bulletin (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1974), Volume 58, No. 378 (January, 1974), p. 10.

with which a school must communicate; (2) lists methods of communication; (3) names the kinds of "messages" to be communicated; (4) identifies ways of obtaining feedback from and involvement of the publics; and (5) suggests methods of evaluating each of the first four steps.

DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR YOUR SCHOOL²⁰

I. PUBLICS

A. Internal

1. Students
2. Faculty
3. Staff

B. Internal - System

1. Central Administration
2. Other schools in District
3. Feeder school cluster
4. School related agencies
5. Private schools and colleges
6. Other administrators
7. Professional organizations

C. External

1. Parents

(a) Community Club

²⁰"A Communications Plan for your School," Dallas Independent School District (August, 1970), mimeo.

- (b) Dad's Club
- (c) Newcomers
- (d) Others

2. Patrons (non-parents)

- (a) Senior citizens
- (b) Community leaders
- (c) Business leaders
- (d) Ministers
- (e) Attorneys
- (f) Doctors

3. Ex-students

- (a) Dropouts
- (b) Graduates

- 4. Community agencies and organizations
- 5. Civic and service groups
- 6. News media

II. THE METHOD

A. Internal

- 1. Staff meetings
- 2. Assemblies
- 3. Newsletters
- 4. P.A. Systems
- 5. Homeroom
- 6. Student Publications
- 7. Small group meetings
- 8. Advisory groups
- 9. Handbooks
- 10. Student Council
- 11. Bulletin boards
- 12. Individual, face-to-face

B. External

- 1. Newsletters
- 2. Meetings
- 3. Telephone

4. Mini-tours
5. Posters
6. Conferences
7. Grade card fillers
8. Appearance of building
9. Students and faculty
10. PTA channels
11. Letters
12. Reports-brochures
13. News media
14. Information contact working with
Communications Department
15. Speeches
16. Displays

III. THE MESSAGE

- A. Praise
- B. Policies
- C. Programs
- D. People
- E. Problems
- F. Plans
- G. Performance
- H. Progress
- I. Priorities

IV. FEEDBACK AND INVOLVEMENT

- A. Participation in community groups and
organizations
- B. Surveys
- C. Questionnaires
- D. Citizen volunteers
- E. Internal advisory committee (students,
faculty, and staff)
- F. External advisory committee (parents,
patrons, businessmen, and clergy)

V. EVALUATION

- A. Questionnaires
- B. Surveys
- C. Advisory committees (find out what people

want to know and if you are reaching them)
D. Success of school program (s)

ADAPTING THE FRAMEWORK: DEL PASO HIGH SCHOOL

The framework was presented to the staff and adopted by them. It was recognized that there are no effective communications programs which can be duplicated cookie-cutter fashion. A communications program will be, and should be, a do-it-yourself operation. It would be necessary to adapt the framework according to the needs of the particular situation.

Prioritizing the Publics:

One cannot communicate, and may not need to communicate, with all the publics with equal vigor and success. It was decided to prioritize the publics in terms of greatest need and impact. Two factors influenced the staff decision regarding emphasis of communication efforts: (1) staff observation and experience; and (2) research findings.

During discussion at meetings concerned with this project, it became evident that the staff

perceived a number of pressures due to the image of a continuation high school. These feelings, it can be suggested, provided, in part, the original impetus for identification of this task as an objective for the 1975-1976 school year. The staff felt the image affected student morale, parent support, and their own morale.

Similar to our society which attributes a higher degree of prestige to the doctor or lawyer than it does to the plumber, schools and school programs have an "aura" -- a prestige -- attached to them. It is generally assumed that attendance and graduation from Harvard University is more prestigious than attendance and graduation from a local state college. It can also be suggested that it is more prestigious to teach at Harvard than at the local university or state college. A similar distinction is often made within the local school districts where teaching at the high school level is considered "better" than teaching at the elementary level.

Within high schools an aura of prestige often

prevails. Many teachers desire to teach the gifted or "honors" classes rather than the average or lower ability groups. It is suggested that this is not only a matter of intellectual stimulation but also a matter of ego and prestige. To teach in a school as unique as a continuation high school, to teach students who have been truants, behavior problems in the school and community, to teach in a school as little understood as the continuation high school affects the prestige of that teacher within the community and the "community" of teachers. Ego is affected.

Much the same type of feeling affects parents and students. Many parents feel that their child's attendance at a continuation high school is a sign of their failure. They do not want to admit that their son or daughter attends a continuation high school and they often offer little support to the school, the teachers, and their children. Students feel out of the mainstream, recognize their parent's attitudes, recognize the image that a continuation high school often has, and their morale suffers also.

The staff felt pride in Del Paso High School and its educational program. It was believed that many

parents and students had the same feelings. However, they felt the need to impress upon the public that the continuation education program in the Walnut Valley Unified School District is a quality program offering a quality education. To accomplish a better understanding and acceptance would be beneficial to all concerned.

The second factor influencing the staff decision regarding emphasis of communication efforts was research findings. The objective established for the task dealt with attitude -- the fostering of a more positive attitude on the part of the public toward Del Paso High School. An article in the Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals by Stanley Elam, "Attitude Formation: Direct Experience Best,"²¹ commented on the survey findings of George Gallup and the implications of that research for school communication efforts. This article was routed to the staff. Elam's article contributed two significant concepts.

²¹Stanley Elam, "Attitude Formation, Direct Experience Best," NASSP Bulletin (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1974), Volume 58, No. 378 (January, 1974), pp. 50-53.

1. The attitudes one holds toward the schools depends heavily on whether the person gets his information from the media or from direct experience. Direct experience generally results in a more favorable attitude.
2. The best source of information about the public schools in their communities is the students themselves, parents rank second as a source of information, with teachers and the school board ranking about equal.

These two factors -- staff observation and experience and research findings -- played a significant role in the staff prioritization of communication efforts. A rating form identifying the various publics was devised. The staff was asked to rate -- prioritize -- on the basis of need and impact the publics within each category. Following the "Delphi" technique, the responses were tallied, the information fed back to the participants, and they were asked to prioritize a second time. The purpose was to identify those publics that Del Paso High School would emphasize in its communications program. The results of the prioritization, within the categories, is as follows.

I. PUBLICS

A. Internal

1. Students
2. Faculty/Staff

B. Internal - System

1. Other schools, staff in the district
2. Other administrators
3. Central administration
4. School related agencies
5. Professional organizations
6. Feeder school cluster
7. Private schools and colleges

C. External

1. Parents.
2. Civic and service groups
3. News media
4. Patrons (non-parents)
5. Community agencies and organizations
6. Ex-students

Although communications efforts would be made with all publics, primary emphasis would concentrate on the highest rated public in each category.

Prioritizing the methods:

Having prioritized the publics for communication efforts, attention was directed to method. It was recognized that it is impossible to communicate with all publics with one message through one medium. Therefore during staff meetings concerned with this task during the latter part of October and into December,

1975, the staff discussed each public, listed those methods considered best for communicating with that public, and prioritized the methods for each public. Again a form was devised for rating the methods and the "Delphi" technique used. The following is the result of that prioritization effort. The publics are identified and the methods, in rank order, listed under each.

I. PUBLICS

A. Internal

1. Students

- a. Individual, face-to-face
- b. Notes to students by principal/teacher
- c. Progress reports
- d. Advisory group
- e. Student bulletin
- f. Small group meetings
- g. Handbooks
- h. Student publications

2. Faculty/Staff

- a. Individual, face-to-face
- b. Staff meetings
- c. Bulletins
- d. Bulletin boards

B. Internal - System

1. Other schools/staff in the district

- a. Individual, face-to-face
 - 1. Committee meetings
 - 2. Visitations to Del Paso

- b. Newsletters
- c. Reports
- d. Student publications

4. School related agencies

- a. Individual, face-to-face
- b. Newsletters
- c. Brochures
- d. Media
- e. Student publications
- f. Appearance of building

5. Professional organizations

- a. Meetings at Del Paso
- b. Individual, face-to-face
- c. Newsletters
- d. Brochures
- e. Reports
- f. Media

6. Feeder school cluster

- a. Individual, face-to-face
- b. Placement Committee operation
- c. Newsletters
- d. Brochures

7. Private schools and colleges

- a. Students in attendance at
- b. Student volunteers from
- c. Media

C.. External

1. Parents

- a. Individual, face-to-face
 - 1. Attitude of child
 - 2. Conferences with teacher
 - 3. Intake interview
- b. Progress Reports

- c. Newsletters
- d. Telephone
 - 1. Secretary's manner
 - 2. Return of calls promptly
 - 3. Discussion of problems
 - 4. Positive Reports
 - 5. Invitations
 - 6. Attendance
- e. Advisory groups
 - 1. Educational specifications committee
 - 2. Special task groups
- f. Open house/Back to School night
- g. Brochures/Reports
- h. Student publications
- i. Letters
- j. Appearance of building
- k. Media

2. Civic and service groups

- a. Individual, face-to-face
- b. Mini-tours
- c. Speeches
- d. Brochures
- e. Newsletters
- f. Media

3. News media

- a. Visitation to school
 - 1. Open House/Back to School night
 - 2. Special events/projects
- b. News releases
- c. Newsletter

4. Patrons (non-parents)

- a. Visitation to school
 - 1. Mini-tours
 - 2. Volunteer aides
- b. Speeches
- c. Brochures/Newsletters
- d. Media

5. Community agencies and organizations

- a. Visitation to the school
- b. Speeches
- c. Brochures/Newsletters
- d. Media

6. Ex-students

- a. Individual, face-to-face
- b. Newsletters
- c. Volunteer tutors
- d. Advisory groups
- e. Media

SUMMARY

It is well to conclude this chapter by reasserting that an effective communications program cannot be duplicated in cookie-cutter fashion. A communications program will be, and should be, a do-it-yourself operation.

The framework offered in this chapter is adequate as an analytic tool for identifying the various publics with whom a school must communicate, the messages to be communicated, the methods to be utilized, and how to obtain feedback and evaluate the communications effort. It must be noted, also, that models are neither right nor wrong, some are merely better than others. It is suggested that the basic framework offered is adequate

and can be easily adapted to other schools in other situations.

Along with the framework has been described a process for adapting the framework to the local situation. Though the process is time consuming, it offers certain advantages. One advantage is that the process necessitates a great deal of involvement. In another school situation it might involve parents, students, and lay people, as well as staff. Involvement, it is suggested, leads to responsibility. With responsibility goes the commitment for success. Secondly, the process is, in itself, a means of communicating. From an assessment of needs a problem was identified, an objective established, and a group oriented toward achievement of a goal obtained. Working together in a consensus climate creates a positive force -- trust among participants increases -- which in turn expands the possibility for greater accomplishment.

Chapter Three

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS - SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

A key part of the school communications program is sound internal communications. Every school administrator wants good student and staff morale -- and many studies indicate that good morale is directly dependent on the effectiveness of the district and school's internal communications efforts.

Internal communications can be defined, simply, as the interchange of ideas and feelings and the dissemination of information within the school and among and between the schools and school system groups. Within the school, three distinct groups have a need for communications: students, staff, and faculty. Within the school system exist such groups as the central

administration, other schools within the district and feeder school clusters, school related agencies, private schools and colleges, other administrators, and professional organizations.

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss and evaluate internal communications efforts. As was suggested in Chapter Two, it was recognized that one cannot, and may not need to communicate with all the publics with equal vigor. Prioritization efforts determined that within the school, students would receive the greatest effort. This chapter details the method of obtaining data upon which was built the communications program with students. The methods of communication are described and individually evaluated. A method of obtaining feedback and evaluation data was developed and utilized in this practicum. Data obtained in this manner is used to evaluate the communications program with students at Del Paso High School.

Two cautions are necessary to mention. First, while it is convenient to differentiate between internal and external communications or communications directed toward one "public", it must be recognized that efforts

overlap. For example, while notes of commendation are directed to the student -- categorized as one of the internal publics -- there is communication value with the parents -- categorized as an external public.

Secondly, one can more readily describe and evaluate concrete examples of communications. The traditional memo, bulletin, announcement, letter, meeting, newsletter, or bulletin board are examples of concrete communications efforts. There is, however, a more subtle form of communication which is of utmost importance. This is the communication of feelings. The communication of warmth, interest, and concern is difficult to describe, quantify, and evaluate objectively. However, it is suggested, the effectiveness of the more concrete forms of communication is dependent, to a large degree, upon the effectiveness of the more subtle forms of communication.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE SCHOOL

In considering the need and possible impact of communications within the school, staff prioritization efforts determined that communication efforts would concentrate on students. Students are important

communication agents. Students see all and hear all about what is going on in the school, and they are inclined to tell all at home, usually in an exaggerated form when it comes to school problems.

Only by knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the school as perceived by the students, can one determine whether agreement or disagreement exists between the student "public" and the school and whether understanding or misunderstanding exists. The communications program can then stress the points understood, and interpret and further explain those points misunderstood to build good will, understanding, and confidence.

For any communications program to be effective it is necessary to employ basic steps: 1) identification of the "publics"; 2) identification of these "publics'" knowledge of the school, understanding of the school, and concerns about the school; 3) identification of the methods of communicating with each public; 4) identification of the kinds of "messages" to be communicated; and 5) identification of ways of obtaining feedback and evaluating the communications

program. Chapter Two discussed items one and three above. To gather information about the students' attitudes and knowledge of the school, an attitude survey was developed.

Student School Attitude-Survey:

During December, 1975, a student attitude - survey was developed. Through the questions, the author attempted to gather information regarding (1) student perception of purpose(s) of the school, (2) student perception of their success at the school, (3) student perceptions of parental and community attitude toward the school, (4) student "fit" into the school, and (5) strengths and weaknesses of the school (See Appendix, Exhibit C). The instrument was administered by the teaching staff in January, 1976.

In administering the instrument, the staff explained the purpose of the questionnaire -- to receive the students' perception of the school. Students were requested to treat the survey seriously -- we really wanted to know how they felt. Students were asked to respond to all items. At the time of administration

there were 97 students enrolled in the school with 85 students present.

The first question asked of the students required them to identify the purpose(s) of Del Paso High School. The question was:

1. In my opinion, the main purpose of Del Paso High School is to . . . (CHECK ONE OR MORE)
 - ☐ a. Make it possible to get a diploma.
 - ☐ b. Help in making up lost credits.
 - ☐ c. Help in review of reading, mathematics, or basic subjects.
 - ☐ d. Help in getting a job.
 - ☐ e. Help in getting along with other people.
 - ☐ f. Help to go back to the regular school.
 - ☐ g. Other (Please explain) _____
 - ☐ h. Other (Please explain) _____
 - ☐ i. No Response

While the responses to the query varied, determined, it can be suggested, by the individual student's specific reason for attendance, 81 (95.2%) of the students checked a -- Make it possible to get a diploma. Three of the students who did not check this response were students

who were planning to request transfer to the regular, comprehensive high school. Each of the three students did check response f. Sixty-five students (76.4%) checked response b -- Help in making up lost credits.

While every pre-determined response received attention by the students, they overwhelmingly perceived the functions of Del Paso High School to be helping the student to make up lost credits and making it possible to get a diploma.

Three questions were asked concerning success at the school. The students were asked to compare their achievement at their previous school with their achievement at Del Paso High School and to indicate whether Del Paso High School had helped them. The three questions were:

2. How well were you doing in school before you came to Del Paso High School? (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ a. Very Well
- ☐ b. Average
- ☐ c. Below Average

3. How do you feel you are doing at Del Paso High School? (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ a. Better than before coming here.
- ☐ b. About the same as in other schools.
- ☐ c. Not very well.

4. Do you feel that Del Paso High School has helped you? (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ a. Yes
- ☐ b. No

In regards to their achievement at their previous high school, 72.9% (62) of the students saw themselves as achieving at below average, 17.6% (15) considered that they were doing average, and 9.4% (8) felt they were doing very well.

Ninety-six percent (82) of the students felt that Del Paso High School was able to help them.

Seventy-nine percent of the students (67) saw themselves as doing better at Del Paso High School than at their previous school. Twelve percent of the students (11) felt they were doing about as well as in their previous school, and eight percent (7) felt they were not doing as well.

Questions seven and eight attempted to measure the socialization process in the school -- how well the students "fit" into the school. Question seven asked the student to "describe" where they fitted in at their previous school. A series of circles, much like a dart board, were drawn. If the student felt he was really in the "center-of-things", he was to place a check mark in the center. The further out from the center, the further "out" of the school and its activities. Question eight was structured in the same manner. It asked the student to describe how he fitted into Del Paso High School.

In regards to their previous school, 60% (51) of the students indicated they were not involved, not a "part of the school". Only 14.1% (12) indicated they were involved and 25.8% (22) were in-between. At Del Paso High School only 8.2% (7) felt they didn't "fit", 25.8% (22) rated themselves as "in-between", and the remainder, 65.8% (56), felt in the center of things.

Questions five and six dealt with students perceptions of parental and community attitude toward the school. Question five asked:

5. How does the community regard Del Paso High School? (CHECK ONE OR MORE)

- ☐ a. Needs to know more about it?
- ☐ b. School gets good publicity.
- ☐ c. People have a negative attitude toward the school.
- ☐ d. Other (Please explain) _____
- ☐ e. Other (Please explain) _____

Only four students (4.7%) felt that Del Paso High School received good publicity. Fifty-three students (62.3%) suggested that people in the community have a negative attitude toward the school. Forty-one students (48.2%) recommended that the community needs to know more about the school. A number of students checked the response, Other, and made comments such as the following.

"They see the school as a place for dopers, drop-outs and flunkies."

"Who cares?"

"People don't want to hear how good it is."

Question six concerned itself with parental attitude as perceived by the students. It asked:

6. How do your parents regard Del Paso High School? (CHECK ONE OR MORE)

- ☐ a. Need to know more about it.
- ☐ b. Have a positive attitude toward the school.
- ☐ c. Have a negative attitude toward the school.
- ☐ d. Other (Please explain) _____
- ☐ e. Other (Please explain) _____

65.7% (46) of the 70 students who responded to this question indicated that their parents had a positive attitude toward the school. Eleven of the students felt that their parents needed to know more about it (15.7%), and twelve students (17.1%) felt their parents had a negative attitude toward the school. One student checked Other and explained -- "As a school for drop-outs, drug addicts, and bad kids".

Question nine asked the students to identify the things they liked about Del Paso High School -- things they felt were its greatest strengths. Twelve items were mentioned. They are listed below with the number of times that response was mentioned indicated in the parentheses.

1. Staff and their attitudes toward and relationships with students (25).
2. Ability to work at own pace (24).
3. Individualized instruction (13).
4. Free time and token economy (11).
5. Amount of time required for attendance (10).
6. Way of earning credit (6).
7. Sensible rules (6).
8. Other students (5).
9. Art program (3).
10. Open classroom structure (3).
11. Help in getting a job (1).
12. Students learn better (1).

The last question on the instrument requested the students to list those things they would like to have changed. They were asked to include things they felt were the school's chief weaknesses. Among those items that were mentioned, only five items were mentioned more than once. The items listed and the number of times is indicated below.

1. Need more school activities (5).
2. Need food service in the P.M. session (5).

3. Attitude and behavior of some students (3).
4. Bad publicity (2).
5. Need more breaks (2).
6. Revise LAP's for equity in credits and time (1).
7. More teachers (1).
8. Larger school (1).
9. Credit cards sent out too late (1).
10. Clean the front of the school (1).
11. Need group activities in the classroom (1).
12. Rules (1).
13. "Push" the students harder (1).

Messages to be Communicated:

A good communications system is one in which school officials not only inform, but are kept informed. Not only are opinions stated and needs expressed, but school officials listen to the opinions and desires of others.

Communications is a two-way street. To make this a reality, feedback must be obtained. Most feedback will be informal. Daily interchange with the various publics will allow for information to be received by the school officials. Periodically, however, it is necessary to survey the various publics more formally.

Written questionnaires are one way to "feel-the pulse" of the publics. These surveys should attempt to determine the knowledge and general attitudes of these publics about the schools, as well as what they want to know and whether the school is reaching them effectively.

Both informal and formal feedback need to be evaluated, frankly, in order to determine the messages that need to be communicated. Only through this type of analysis can one identify the points to be reinforced and further explain those points misunderstood. Secondly, if changes need to be made -- and in all probability they will be necessary -- those changes can be identified.

Analysis of the data received from the survey instrument, combined with informal feedback, suggested the following.

1. The students recognize and understand the primary purposes of Del Paso High School.
2. The students, generally, felt that they were successful and learning at Del Paso High School.

3. The students feel included in the "mainstream" at Del Paso High School.
4. The students felt that their parents and the community needed to know more about the school and needed to acquire a better understanding and acceptance of its educational role.
5. The students recognized a number of strengths of the school.
6. The students identified a number of weaknesses-needs within the school.

The above made obvious that the primary emphasis of the communications efforts with students would be reinforcement of attitudes. Efforts would be expended to reinforce the students feelings of success in the school, to reinforce their feelings of belonging, and to reinforce those things they considered to be the real strengths of the school. At the same time, efforts would be made with the students to bring about change in those areas they identified as weaknesses-needs.

Objectives of the Communication Efforts:

In order to evaluate the success or failure of any effort, a basis for comparison must be established. Four objectives were established for the communication efforts with students. These were:

1. By June 1, 1976, no less than 79% of the students will rate themselves as "doing better" at Del Paso High School than at their previous school as measured by a student-attitude survey.
2. By June 1, 1976, no less than 65% of the students will rate themselves as "in the center of things" at Del Paso High School as measured by a student-attitude survey.
3. By June 1, 1976, the students, given a rating scale, will indicate that their teacher is "superior" in all characteristics essential for teaching success at Del Paso High School.
4. By June 1, 1976, the staff will have resolved to the satisfaction of the students the two major weaknesses-needs as identified in the December student-attitude survey.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

During the planning phase of this project, the staff had identified a number of communication methods. Each of the methods will be described.

Individual, face-to-face:

The survey instrument data revealed that the students considered the greatest strength of the school to be the staff and their relationships with students. This strength, it can be suggested, accounts, in part, for the students' feeling of "fit" into the

school as indicated by their response to question eight on the instrument. This attitude was one the staff wished to continually reinforce through face-to-face contact with the students.

To enumerate the multiplicity of techniques used by staff in their individual contacts with students, or the number of hours each staff member spent talking with individual students would be virtually impossible. All staff members made attempts to:

1. Sit and eat with students in their lunch/break area.
2. Follow-up on problems and resolve complaints -- no matter how small or insignificant they seemed.
3. Be accessible to students to discuss problems, gripes, or suggestions.
4. Turn students on by being enthusiastic and showing that they were genuinely interested in what students were doing.
5. Be a listener.
6. Call absent students.

Suffice it to say that every staff member made a sincere effort to be available to students at any time, for any purpose.

Notes to Students:

During the 1974-1975 school year, the author and staff had developed and implemented a behavior modification program at the school.²² As the behavior modification program developed during that year, some staff members found that written notes to their students provided a significant positive reinforcement. It was suggested that the principal might further this reinforcement by also writing notes to students. Occasionally, therefore, a teacher would request the author to write a special note to a student. This practice continued on a rather informal basis throughout the first semester of the 1975-1976 school year.

As the staff discussed the methods and messages to be transmitted to the students, a strong feeling developed that the writing of notes, especially by the principal, could have a significant effect upon the students and their attitudes toward self, school, and learning. The concept was that successes, be they large or small, achieved by students should be recognized. The message was praise.

²²See the Midi-Practicum Report presented to Nova University by the author.

Every Thursday, during lunch, staff meetings were held. The first order of business was for the staff to provide the author with a list of students they wished notes to be written to. Note cards with the school name and the school logo were printed to indicate that the principal spoke for the school as well as himself. The 30 seconds or so it took to write "Congratulations" and sign, or "Keep up the good work" or "You have made us proud" let the student know that the principal was aware of his progress and performance and that he cared.

Progress Reports:

Grading is one of the most controversial topics in American education. From the elementary to the graduate level, most of the students' or the teachers' life in school revolves, directly or indirectly, around the grading system. In recent years, the traditional grading system using A's, B's, and C's has come under increasing criticism.²³ As a result, hundreds

²³For an excellent discussion on grades and grading see Howard Kirschenbaum, Sidney B. Simon, and Rodney W. Napier, Wad-Ja-Get? The Grading Game in American Education (New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1971).

of schools and colleges have introduced changes in their grading system.

It is not necessary to enter into an examination of the differing philosophies regarding grading and reporting. It is necessary to explicate the philosophy of Del Paso High School.

The instructional approach of Del Paso High School might be termed the Mastery Approach. It is not only a different method of grading but an entirely different approach toward teaching and learning.

The mastery approach begins with the teacher deciding what his operational or behavioral objectives are for his students, that is, what exactly he wants them to be able to do as a result of their learnings. He then organized these learnings into units of study and arranges the units in a logical sequence, each unit serving as a necessary or logical building block to the unit succeeding it. Then the teacher determines how he will measure whether or not the student has mastered the body of knowledge and skills in each of the units.

At the very beginning of the course, the teacher

provides the students with all this information -- what they are expected to learn, how their learning will be demonstrated, and what level of proficiency is required before they can move on to the next part of the course. In addition, he explains to the students what resources are available to help them achieve the level of mastery.

Students are then free to master the course content in their own fashion. Each student proceeds at his own pace. One student may take a semester to accomplish what is normally done in a year. Another student may take a year to do a semester's work in a particular subject. Under this system, the course is oriented much more to the individual student and the teacher spends most of his time in individual tutoring rather than in large group lecture and discussion.

The focus of this system is on success, not failure. Since a criteria for a passing score has been designated, any student who meets the criteria passes; any student who does not meet the criteria continues to work to bring it up to passing. Our grading system is simply PASS. Students feel freer to take risks, disagree with

the teacher, and explore the subject in their own way.

Since, in our philosophy, we wish to encourage the attitude of success -- which, in itself, is motivational, we have determined to offer "variable" credits. In California, the normal semester course is worth five (5) credits, a year-long course is worth ten (10) credits. Having designed our courses into units and having employed specific behavioral objectives, it is relatively easy to judge what amount of learning is worth one (1) credit. Therefore, we offer one (1) credit at a time until the student completes the five or ten credits in the course. The earning of each individual credit is a success for the student and a building block for more success.

The emphasis is on learning, success, and success as a motivator. The report card, or progress report, must reflect that philosophy. It was apparent that our Progress Reports were not reflecting this philosophy and were not structured to allow for the type of reporting we wanted. Three messages, it was felt, should be transmitted through the Progress Report -- Praise, Progress, and Performance.

It was decided to re-structure the Progress Report form. The previous report (See Appendix, Exhibit D) had included a heading -- Areas of Improvement -- for description of work accomplished. It also had a heading -- Areas Needing Improvement -- for description of skills and knowledge the student needed to improve on. Two opposing signals were being transmitted. It was felt that the emphasis should be on the positive -- praise -- and on what was learned -- performance and progress. The Progress Report was restructured (See Appendix, Exhibit E) to include only one heading -- Learning Demonstrated.

Secondly, the staff made a concerted effort to change their behavior in writing the Progress Reports. Each staff member attempted to write the report in a manner which reinforced for the student what was learned. Included also was how the learning was evaluated and to what degree the learning was accomplished. At the same time that this would reinforce the student's knowledge of his learning, the Progress Report would emphasize for the parents our concern for learning and their child rather than seat-time and exposure.

Advisory Group:

In early February, individual classes elected representatives to serve on a Student Advisory Council. This council met every Wednesday to discuss problems, make suggestions, and relay information, decisions, and possible solutions to the students and principal. Both minor and major problems were discussed and solved. Projects were originated, organized, and carried out through the group.

Two minor problems that the Student Advisory Council considered were expenses for student supplies and adequate activities. One of the weaknesses identified by the students in the student survey was the lack of activities at the school. The Student Advisory Council undertook to outline activities for the remainder of the year. Their suggestions and a schedule of activities was taken to the student body through their classes, ratified and adopted by the students and staff.

Another minor problem had to do with the expense of supplying students with pencils and pens. This practice had been followed since the inception of the school. However, the practice was being abused by the

students as pencils were being broken, left laying around the rooms and on the campus. The Advisory Council, decided, after consulting with their individual classes, to stop the practice of supplying these items and to begin to sell the pencils and pens. Profit would go into the student body fund for purchase of library books or other educational materials and equipment.

A major project undertaken by the Advisory Council was curriculum reform. The author and staff had been committed to developing a "competency based" educational system. As this system was developed and the ideas formulated, discussion was held with the students on the Advisory Council. The concept was to signal to the students the continually changing nature of the school and the schools' concern for developing the best possible educational program for the students. The final draft of a competency-based educational program and a number of specific recommendations for change were discussed with the Council. The package was forwarded to the Superintendent. Specific policy and regulations will be developed during the 1976-1977 school year to implement the program.

Another major project was undertaken upon recommendation of the Advisory Council. This was a fund raising dinner to be held at the school. The dinner was seen as a means of raising funds and a means of bringing the public to the school. Organized by a parent group and the Advisory Council this event realized an adult attendance of over 300 and a profit of \$450.00.

Small Group Meetings:

'Students need correct information, explanations and answers from school officials; school officials need correct information, constructive opinions, and serious questions from students. School officials and students should talk together more often than they do. Unfortunately, in many places communication is primarily one way -- over the intercom, from the podium, or in the bulletin. These are not effective two-way communication techniques.

One of the major techniques to break the one-way communications barrier is to visit classrooms for the purpose of answering questions, explaining new rules and regulations, and listening to student comments.

The author utilized this technique numerous times during the school year. Two instances serve as examples of what can be accomplished.

One of the desires of students in the afternoon session, expressed through the survey instrument, was food services during their breaks. In the morning session and during lunch the school had been able to provide a catering service (private concern) to fill this need. When it became apparent that this was a need of the afternoon group the principal went to each class and discussed it with each. Volunteers to work with the principal were identified. The students spent two afternoons making telephone calls to different catering services without being able to locate anyone able to provide the service. The principal, with a couple of the student volunteers, visited each classroom and explained what had been done and the results. The classroom visitors listened to further suggestions from the students and explained the difficulty with each -- the principal allowing the students to answer most of the questions. The technique was successful. The students recognized that they had been listened to, action had been taken on their request, and, though a

satisfactory solution was not possible, the reasons were explained.

On another occasion a theft occurred at the school. An electronic, printing calculator, purchased with student body money, was stolen. The principal went to each class and told of the theft and discussed with the students the concepts that the school operated on -- trust, adult responsibility, etc.. The calculator was returned.

The point of this second example is that the effort made to go into each classroom to discuss the problem, to reinforce the concepts and foundations of the school, the engendering of some feelings of empathy, trust, and responsibility was successful. Other techniques -- such as letting the staff members talk about the problem or commenting in the student bulletin -- would not have been as successful.

Student Bulletins:

Del Paso High School's student bulletin, the "Eagles' Eyrle," was a totally new effort. Being a relatively small school with a small number of students

it had been assumed that it wasn't necessary to formalize the communication efforts. However, many messages were not being received by the students.

It was decided to establish a student bulletin to reinforce student attitudes, signal possible changes and obtain reactions that might clarify thoughts and/or alter solution strategies, and inform students of events and activities. The bulletin was published the first day of every school week, distributed to all students by the teachers, read to the students, and posted in the classrooms.

EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS WITH STUDENTS

Communication efforts with students were directed at reinforcing the students' feeling of success in school, reinforcing their feelings of belonging, and reinforcing those things they considered to be the real strengths of the school. At the same time, efforts were made to bring about change in those areas that the students identified as weaknesses-needs. Stated in behavioral terms, the objectives established were:

1. By June 1, 1976, no less than 79% of the students will rate themselves as "doing better" at Del Paso High School than at their previous school as measured by a student-attitude survey.
2. By June 1, 1976, no less than 65% of the students will rate themselves as "in the center of things" at Del Paso High School as measured by a student-attitude survey.
3. By June 1, 1976, the students, given a rating scale, will indicate that their teacher is "superior" in all characteristics essential for teaching success at Del Paso High School.
4. By June 1, 1976, the staff will have resolved to the satisfaction of the students the two major weaknesses-needs as identified in the December student-attitude survey.

Obtaining Evaluation Data:

In June, 1976, a second questionnaire (See Appendix, Exhibit F) was administered to gather data. This survey was conducted with 59 students in attendance. Of the 59 students, 43 had responded to the first questionnaire in December.

Results of Follow-Up Survey:

George Gallup discovered that "the best source of information about the public schools in their communities is the students themselves"²⁴ Assuming Gallup's

²⁴Elam, loc. cit., p. 52.

conclusions to be correct, it is of extreme importance that students have a positive attitude toward their school of attendance. The emphasis of the communication program at Del Paso High School with students was to continually reinforce an already positive attitude.

To be satisfied with an already positive attitude and ignore the necessity of continuous reinforcement would be a critical mistake. Since students are of major importance in fostering an attitude within the community, it is necessary to constantly strive to develop and maintain a positive attitude on the part of students toward the school.

Of significance in developing and maintaining a positive attitude toward a school is the student's feeling of success in that school. Students who do not find success in school become alienated -- they quit learning and drop out of school, psychologically and physically.²⁵

²⁵R. J. Havighurst and L. J. Stiles, "National Policy for Alienated Youth," The Phi Delta Kappan, April, 1961.

The first objective established was:

By June 1, 1976, no less than 79% of the students will rate themselves as "doing better" at Del Paso High School than at their previous school as measured by a student-attitude survey.

As the data in table 3.1, page 67, indicates, the objective was accomplished. In the original attitude survey, conducted in January, 1976, 79% of the students indicated that they were doing better at Del Paso High School than at their previous high school. The follow-up attitude survey shows a growth of 2%, from 79% to 81%. This data is for the totality of students responding to the questionnaires.

However, only 43 students responded to both questionnaires. Del Paso High School accepts students at any time of the school year. It also releases students from attendance whenever the student completes the required number of credits for graduation. Many students leave the district, run-away, join the service, or, in other ways, leave the school. This accounts for the smaller number available to answer both questionnaires.

What is significant is that the longer the student

TABLE - 3.1

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE OF SUCCESS AT DEL PASO HIGH SCHOOL

QUESTION: How do you feel you are doing at Del Paso High School?

RESPONSE	TOTAL SURVEYED			STUDENTS RESPONDING TO BOTH SURVEYS		
	Pre-Attitude Survey	Post-Attitude Survey	% +/-	Pre-Attitude Survey	Post-Attitude Survey	% +/-
BETTER	79% (67)	81% (48)	+2%	69.7% (30)	81.3% (35)	+11.6%
ABOUT THE SAME	12% (11)	13.5% (8)	+1.5%	20.9% (9)	16.2% (7)	-4.7%
NOT VERY WELL	8% (7)	5.0% (3)	-3%	9.3% (4)	2.3% (1)	-7.0%

is enrolled at Del Paso High School the greater is his attitude of success in the school situation. On the pre-attitude survey, 69.7% of these students felt they were doing better. On the post-attitude survey, 81.3% felt they were doing better, a growth of 11.6%.

A second question was asked to obtain a perspective on how the students felt about their achievement at Del Paso High School. Students were asked, on both questionnaires, whether or not they felt Del Paso High School had helped them. On the first instrument, 96.4% (82) of the students (85) felt that Del Paso High School had helped them. On the post-attitude survey, 96.6% (57) of the students (59) felt that Del Paso High School had helped them.

There are many factors which could influence this attitude. One of the variables is communication. One cannot make a direct correlation between the communication efforts and the positive growth in attitude. One can only suggest that without continual reinforcement of that attitude, through communication efforts, growth would not be as substantial.

Students who find success in school feel positive

about that school. They become positive public relations agents in the community. Students who do not feel alienated from the school -- who do not feel rejected^e by the school and in turn reject the school -- also become positive public relations agents in the community.

The second objective established was:

By June 1, 1976, no less than 65% of the students will rate themselves as "in the center of things" at Del Paso High School as measured by a student-attitude survey.

In both the pre- and post-attitude surveys, a question was included which asked the students to describe where they "fitted-in" at Del Paso High School. A series of circles, much like a dart board, were drawn. If the student felt he was really in the "center-of-things", he was to place a check mark in the center. The further out from the center, the further "out" of the school and its activities.

On the first instrument, 65.8% of the students felt in the center of things. 25.8% rated themselves as "in-between" and the remainder, 8.2%, felt they didn't fit. As Table 3.2, page 70, indicates, there was a

significant change in attitude during the time-span of this practicum. On the post-attitude survey instrument, 72.8% (43) of the 59 student responding indicated they felt in the "center-of-things". Only 5.0% (3) students felt they didn't fit, while 22% (13) of the students felt "in-between". The table indicates there was a decline in the percentages who felt out of the mainstream, with a definite, significant increase in the percentage of students who felt in the "center-of-things".

Table 3.2

SOCIALIZATION INTO DFL PASO HIGH SCHOOL

Response	Pre-Attitude Survey	Post-Attitude Survey	% +/-
Center of Things	65.8	72.8	+7.0
In-Between	25.8	22.0	-3.8
Out	8.2	5.0	-3.2

Again, the author must caution that a direct correlation between communication efforts and this particular attitude cannot be drawn. Other variables intervene and no effort was made to measure the effects of these other variables. It can only be suggested that without communication efforts -- the more subtle forms of communication -- the results may not have been as positive.

The staff, their attitudes toward and relationships with students, was identified as one of the major strengths of Del Paso High School on the initial attitude survey. This attitude was one that the staff wanted to continually reinforce. The objective established was:

By June 1, 1976, the students, given a rating scale, will indicate that their teacher is "superior" in all characteristics essential for teaching success at Del Paso High School.

The post-attitude survey attempted to ascertain whether or not the teaching staff maintained that atmosphere which fosters such an attitude. It was assumed that if teaching staff members (1) showed a sincere

interest in students, (2) were considered to be fair with all students, (3) were helpful, (4) were pleasant (5) kept the students informed of how they were doing, (6) were helpful with both school work and outside problems and activities, and (7) demonstrated a sincere interest in the school they would reinforce the attitude expressed by the students. Secondly, through student ratings in these categories, staff members could identify areas for improvement.

'Implicit in the questionnaire was an attitude on the part of the teaching staff. It is rare that students have the opportunity to assess teachers. When the students were requested to do so, the message was signaled to the students that we really do care what they think about us -- the staff. The instrument, in itself, was a communication device.

The question asked was:

FACULTY AND STAFF

The opportunity for students to assess the teaching staff is not often available. You have that opportunity. As we view ourselves and attempt to improve we would appreciate your THOUGHTFUL and HONEST reflections. Circle the name of your teacher but assess all teachers.

Circle one: G - GOOD
F - FAIR
P - POOR

	HOGAN	BALES	KENDALL	ANDERSON	SCHAFER
1. Shows a sincere interest in students	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P
2. Is fair with <u>all</u> students	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P
3. Helpful	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P
4. Pleasant	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P
5. Keeps you informed on how you are doing	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P
6. Is helpful with both school work and outside problems and activities	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P
7. Appears to have a strong interest in our school	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P	G F P

By applying a numerical equivalent to each of the suggested ratings -- 5 for Good, 3 for Fair, and 1 for Poor -- an arithmetic average was calculated. First, as shown in Table 3.3 an average score was calculated on each item for each teacher as rated by the students within the self-contained classroom. These students, it can be assumed, would know that individual teacher best. Second, excluding the students within the self-contained class, an average was calculated for each teacher as rated by the other students in the school. Table 3.4, page 75, presents that data.

Table 3.3

AVERAGE RATING OF STAFF MEMBER
BY STUDENTS IN SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM

Item	Staff Member				
	BS	HK	DA	DH	KB
1	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.9
2	4.1	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.0
3	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.1
4	3.9	4.0	4.4	4.1	4.5
5	3.6	4.0	3.6	3.8	3.8
6	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.9	3.8
7	4.7	4.1	4.6	4.3	4.4

Table 3.4

AVERAGE RATING OF STAFF MEMBER BY STUDENTS
OTHER THAN THOSE IN SELF-CONTAINED CLASSROOM

Item	Staff Member				
	BS	HK	DA	DH	KB
1	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.9
2	4.1	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.0
3	4.3	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.1
4	3.9	4.0	4.4	4.1	4.5
5	3.6	4.0	3.6	3.8	3.8
6	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.9	3.8
7	4.7	4.1	4.6	4.3	4.4

The data, as presented in the tables, suggests that the staff was able to display to the students those attributes considered to be significant in fostering and maintaining the attitude, on the part of students, that the staff does care about them. Secondly, a comparison of the two tables suggests that each staff member was not only successful in displaying these attributes to their individual, self-contained classes, but were perceived by the total student body in a most positive way.

As significant as this data are the comments made

by students about their individual teachers. Another question on the instrument requested the students to identify one outstanding feature of their teacher. Among the comments were:

BS "He more involved in his work than most teachers." (sic)

"His personality! Its great!" (sic)

"He is liberal, gives you fair breaks, treats you like you treat him."

HK "Yes, I believe _____ really cares about everyone of us. I know I really enjoy having her as my teacher."

"Yea. she really cares wether you are learning something or not." (sic)

"I've learned more from _____ than I have from any other teacher, and I enjoy her sincere warmth and caring that she shows us students."

DA "He is really helpful and friendly."

"I can talk to him about my problems at school or home."

"He's nice understanding, helps us with all our problems even outside. he really listens he brings certs, he really a great teacher. and he tries to make our school work fun. he's really great." (sic)

DH "He tries to help, he cares what happens to students outside the school."

"His helpfulness and understandings." (sic)

KB "She knows how to work with people."

"Pleasant to have as a teacher these years. I wish there were more of her. She very decent outstanding teacher." (sic)

"She helps you to learn and tries to help in your work."

Students were also provided with the opportunity to assess the principal. The question asked was:

Assess the Principal. Circle one:

G - GOOD

F - FAIR

P - POOR

10. Shows a sincere interest in students.	G F P
11. Provides fair and equitable treatment for all.	G F P
12. Helpful.	G F P
13. Pleasant.	G F P
14. Has a strong interest in the school.	G F P
15. Is sensitive to and shows respect for the opinions and beliefs of students.	G F P

Applying the same numerical equivalents to the rating scale as for the teaching staff, an arithmetic average was calculated. Table 3.5, page 78, presents data on the "scores" received by the school principal.

Table 3.5

STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ON SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

ITEM	SCORE
10	4.2
11	4.2
12	4.1
13	4.1
14	4.6
15	3.9

Taken as a whole, the post-attitude survey strongly suggests that the entire staff did an admirable job in reinforcing that which the students had indicated was the schools major strength. No evaluation can be suggested as to whether improvement occurred as the instruments did not provide for that type of measurement.

The fourth objective established was:

By June 1, 1976, the staff will have resolved to the satisfaction of the students the two major

weaknesses-needs as identified in the December student-attitude survey.

The two items most mentioned by the students on that instrument were (1) lack of activities and (2) lack of food services for the afternoon session.

As has been described in this chapter, actions were taken to resolve the problems and bring about change. One of the needs -- food services -- was unable to be fulfilled. However, this was discussed with the students and, in the opinion of the author, their understanding and acceptance obtained. The second need was resolved by meeting with the students and planning an activity schedule.

The post-attitude survey asked three questions to garner the students attitudes toward these planned activities. The first question asked -- "Do you feel we had the right number of school activities this year?" -- resulted in 64.4% (38) of the 59 students responding rating the activity schedule as "O.K.". Fifteen of the students (25.4%) desired more activities and 10.1% (6) of the students wanted fewer activities. The author concludes that the activity schedule was

satisfactory to the majority of the students.

The activity schedule was a first attempt and needed to be critically evaluated. Therefore, the question was asked -- "What activities would you like to add?" The concept was to identify activities that, given more time and thought, the students were now interested in. Sixteen students made suggestions, 27.1% of the respondents. The sixteen students identified seven activities they would like to add. These are listed below with the number of times mentioned indicated in the parentheses.

1. Educational Field Trips (5)
2. Horseback Riding (3)
3. Beach (3)
4. Music Lessons (3)
5. Basketball (1)
6. Zoo (1)
7. Magic Mountain (1)

The converse to the above question was asked -- "What activities would you like to do away with?" Only seven students responded, 11.8%, and identified two items

--fishing (6) and golfing (1).

This information provides the school with input for planning activities for the 1976-1977 school year. Change occurred because of the communication program, feedback was obtained, and, because of the input, the program can be altered to fit the desires of this public.

EVALUATION OF THE METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Formal evaluation -- questionnaires -- of the various methods of communication was not attempted. As was suggested earlier in this chapter (See page 37) the more subtle forms of communication are difficult to evaluate and measure quantitatively. Therefore, evaluation was obtained informally -- through discussion with individual staff members, at staff meetings, and through comments made by students, staff, and parents.

Individual -- face-to-face:

Personnel play a very important part in the attitude continuation students have toward the school.

Not only at Del Paso High School, but at other schools and continuation high schools, research has indicated that the more relaxed, accepting attitude and general understanding of teachers was frequently mentioned as an asset by students.²⁶

The data obtained through this practicum indicates that the staff is viewed to have those characteristics which foster a positive attitude toward the school on the part of students. This attitude can only be fostered through face-to-face communications. The strongest testament to the effectiveness of this method of communication is the statements made by students as quoted on pages 75-76 of this report.

Notes to Students:

The author considers his written notes to students to be one of the more effective methods of communicating his concern for and respect of students and their accomplishments. Some data are available to evaluate this

²⁶Educational Research Council of Cleveland, Ohio, "The Teacher Education Assessment Project: An Investigation," Department of Health, Education and Welfare (December, 1970), p. 23.

means of communication.

Shortly after implementing this method of communication, the author received a written note from a student in return. The note simply thanked the principal for his concern. Upon receiving the note the author decided to log the comments of students and began such a log in February, 1976. At about the same time, a telephone call was received from a parent for the sole purpose of commenting on the affect of the written note upon the parent's child.

The log (See Appendix, Exhibit C) indicates that five phone calls were received from parents in which the written notes were mentioned, two written notes from parents were received, eight written notes from students were received, and eleven students came by the office to thank the principal.

The author considers that this method of communicating with students was extremely successful. The effort will be continued.

Progress Reports:

The Progress Report was viewed as a means of delivering three messages to the students -- 1) praise, 2) progress, and 3) performance. The effectiveness of this method of communication was significant as evidenced by the students' attitude toward their achievement at Del Paso High School in the post-attitude survey cited above.

In formal discussion with the staff concerning this means of communication, the staff used the following examples to suggest the success of this method.

1. Many students were willing to stay after dismissal time to wait for their teachers to correct their work and tests and to write the Progress Report. Every staff member had this happen on numerous occasions throughout the year.
2. Many students were beginning to write their own Progress Reports. They were able to follow the pattern of language established by their instructor and cite the objective(s) of the particular learning segment. The staff considered this to be a most significant evidence of the success of this method of communicating.

Add to this the multitude of times students

stopped by the principal's office to show the Progress Report to the principal, the evident feeling of success and pride in their accomplishment, and their ability, when questioned by the principal, to cite the objective achieved (what they had learned). The author considers this method of communication to be very successful.

Advisory Group:

The Advisory Council was another totally new instrument of communication developed because of this practicum effort. A number of problems were discussed and solved by the Advisory Council.

There is some question about the effectiveness of this group as a two-way communication technique with the total student body. There was effective two-way communication between the principal and the members of the Council. However, the Council members' role of representing and relaying information to and from students is questionable. The staff felt that there was great reticence on the part of the Council members to actually discuss problems, suggestions, or decisions with the students in the classroom unless the teacher became actively involved and helped lead the discussion.

Thus, one can question the effectiveness of communicating with the total student body through this method. It can be suggested that one would find the same situation in most any school. What is conclusive is that this is an effective way of communicating with a certain group of students representing the total student body.

Small Group Meetings:

Too often the principal of a school is viewed as that person who has an office in the administration building, unaccessible to students, that person who generally introduces speakers at assemblies, and that person who is viewed, on occasions, walking from the administration building to the faculty lunch room, If he enters a classroom it is to evaluate the teacher and class. Small group or class meetings with the principal places a different perspective on that authority figure.

The author met with students in small-groups sessions, normally with a class, on a number of occasions during the year. The two instances cited in this chapter are merely examples of the many times spent in the class-

room with students.

The instances cited evidence the success of this means of communicating problems, plan, priorities, and other significant messages.

Student Bulletins:

Bulletins are essentially one-way communication devices. They are a necessary method of providing the student with information. The author attempted to make the bulletins more of a two-way communication device by asking questions of the students in the bulletin, publishing birthday wishes, congratulating students on performance, welcoming new students to the school and, in a sense, introducing them to the other students, and, when necessary, chastizing student actions.

The author did not attempt to formally evaluate this method of communication. The author views the bulletin as necessary and will continue the effort.

SUMMARY

Effective communication is the essential which makes

everything else possible.

Communication is more important for schools than for most other enterprises. As a public institution, schools are subject to the full spectrum of public observation and reaction. And, as Gallup suggests, the best source of information about the public schools in their communities is the students themselves.

Students who have positive attitudes toward their school of attendance, who feel they are really a part of the school, can be the most effective means of communicating with the public. To develop that sincere attitude on the part of students is a challenge. Maintaining that attitude is also a challenge.

Only by knowing what students think, knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the school as perceived by students, can one determine whether agreement or disagreement exists between the student "public" and the school and whether understanding or misunderstanding exists.

This chapter described and evaluated the communication efforts made with students at Del Paso High School.

A method of obtaining information to determine the communication needs was developed and utilized. The various methods of communication were described and individually evaluated. Evaluation of the communication efforts with students indicates that all the objectives established were met.

Chapter Four

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS -- SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three dealt with communication efforts made with students within the school. This chapter concerns itself with communication efforts made with two publics within the "internal -- system" classification. The two publics are 1) other schools/staff in the district and 2) other administrators (comprehensive high school) in the district.

Each of the publics will be discussed separately. The methods of communication will be described. The total process and impact will be evaluated for each as will be the methods of communication.

The category of "other schools/staff in the dis-

trict had received the highest priority ranking by the staff of Del Paso High School in their analysis of communication needs. As was suggested on pages 24-27 of this report, the staff of Del Paso High School felt out of the "mainstream" -- felt that they were considered to be unique and that their involvement in the educational program of continuation education was little understood or accepted. Desiring to be viewed in a different light the staff chose this group as the "public" to concentrate communication efforts on.

It had been the author's intention to develop and implement a communications program with the highest priority rated public within each classification. However, it was decided to also make a concerted effort to communicate with other administrators at the comprehensive high school. The prime reason for including this "public" was because of informal feedback received from one of the comprehensive high school's vice-principals -- the Vice-Principal for Attendance and Welfare. The author has the highest regard for this gentleman, his opinions, his knowledge of the comprehensive high school and his co-workers. Having worked closely with this administrator for a period of five years, recognizing

this administrator's very positive feelings about Del Paso High School, the author accepted his judgement that other administrators at the comprehensive high school didn't exhibit a complete knowledge and understanding of the continuation high school. He had asked, for some time, that Del Paso High School do "something" to better inform other administrators and staff at his assigned school. The author determined to make the effort to communicate with the administrators at the comprehensive high school.

INTERNAL -- SYSTEM:

OTHER SCHOOLS/STAFF IN THE DISTRICT

The Walnut Valley Unified School District, in 1975-1976, consisted of eight schools -- five elementary schools, one intermediate school, one comprehensive high school and one continuation high school. Over 260 certificated staff members and 197 classified staff members were employed to serve the 6,100 students enrolled.

Desiring to have other staffs understanding and acceptance of the concepts and functions of Del Paso High School, it was recognized that a "Madison Avenue"

approach would not be effective. The "Madison Avenue" approach -- the association of camouflage and smooth talk in advertising -- was not desired. Salesmanship is necessary, but not the key. The desire was not to "sell" the school, but to have people understand and accept the role of the school in the educational program of the district. Research indicated that direct experience was best. This was the primary method chosen.

Because of the large number of staff in the district, it would be impossible to provide direct experience for all. By providing direct experience for some, chosen from different schools within the district, and having them, hopefully, discuss their experience with other members on their faculties, the process of change would have been begun. It was recognized that the process would be long. However, the goal was to create an ever increasing circle of people well informed about the school. Thus, beginning small and increasing in scope over the years fit well into our concept of a communications program.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Major efforts to communicate were made through the individual, face-to-face method, accompanied by newsletters, appearance of the building, student volunteers, and a brochure. Each of these methods will be described.

Individual, Face-to-Face:

Direct experience with the school, as has been pointed out, is the most effective means of communicating with a "public". To give all staff members within the district -- certificated and classified -- that direct, quality experience would be impossible. Three pointed efforts were made by the staff members of Del Paso High School to communicate individually with other staff members in the district. One effort was through membership in district wide committees, the second effort by bringing other staff members to Del Paso High School, and the third effort was through individual participation in district/community activities.

Each staff member agreed to serve on and was assigned to a district wide committee such as the Budget Review

Committee, the FUSE (Future of Secondary Education) Committee, the Right-to-Read Committee, and the Bicentennial Committee. Each committee had representation from the various schools and/or levels within the district.

Committee membership provided the opportunity to communicate in two ways. First, the staff members of Del Paso High School were made visible to other staff members of the district. For most members of the committees, this was the first time they had the opportunity to meet an instructor from a continuation high school. Secondly, it provided the staff of Del Paso High School the opportunity to discuss their program with other faculty.

Staff members inform the author that other committee members would ask questions before and after meetings about Del Paso High School which would provide them with the opportunity to discuss the continuation education program and its concepts. Staff members also stated that initial discussion with other faculty members would lead to other questions at other times and that, in their opinion, other faculty became more knowledgeable and accepting of the program at the continuation high school.

Such informal feedback indicates that the staff's participation in such committees had positive effects in our communication efforts.

Each staff member upon initiation of the project, agreed to make an effort to invite at least one staff member from another school in the district to Del Paso High School for visitation. Each staff member did so, as well as making the effort to visit another school in the district. Such visitations lasted anywhere between a half-hour to two hours.

Such efforts had two effects. The first effect was to make the staff members of Del Paso High School visible upon another campus and signaled to that staff that we were aware of and accepting of their educational program. Secondly, visitation to Del Paso High School made other staff members aware of the district's program of continuation education and what the problems, priorities, and program of Del Paso High School were.

The only comments received after a visitation to the school were positive.

Staff members attempted to become involved in some

community/district project. For example, one teacher and the school secretary had roles in a district-staff drama production. While not a planned communication effort -- in the Madison Avenue sense -- their involvement did represent Del Paso High School. Another staff member was released, upon request of the Director of the Mentally Gifted Minor program, to take part as a leader in an outdoor experience. This staff member worked with a number of other district staff members in the program and, thus, was seen as a representative of Del Paso High School. Again, the opportunity was provided, through this involvement, to discuss Del Paso High School and its educational program.

Newsletters:

The Newsletter published by Del Paso High School was directed to the parent public. Therefore, in depth discussion of this method of communication must wait until Chapter Five.

It was intended that, along with parents, a copy would be sent to each administrator in the district -- both at the district and school level -- along with

copies for each staff room and copies for Community Club officers of each school.²⁷ For these publics, The Newsletter was a means of providing information.

Appearance of Building:

During the 1975-76 school year, Del Paso High School was housed in a leased industrial building. Little could be done to add aesthetic definition to the facility. However, it could be kept neat and clean, both outside and inside. Cleanliness and neatness of the facility would, in the author's opinion, emphasize the students' attitudes toward the school and that, though the students were defined as "divergent", they were not necessarily so at school.

The outside of the school is free of graffiti, as is the inside. The inside of the building has been decorated in warm colors, lending an atmosphere of relaxed comfort to the school. Art pieces of the students are displayed prominently throughout the school.

²⁷The Community Clubs are the district's parent/teacher organization. However, they are not affiliated with the PTA (Parent, Teachers Association).

Student Volunteers:

The author, over the years, had made the attempt to involve the students of Del Paso High School as teacher aides/tutors in the various elementary schools in the district. It has been extremely difficult because of the transitory nature of the students.

During 1975-1976, six students were placed in the elementary school situation. Four of the six students continued their volunteer work until the end of the year or until they had graduated. Two students did not complete their commitment -- one ran away from home and the other left home to marry.

Brochures:

A brochure is one means of communicating with a vast number of publics. Del Paso High School had not published a brochure until the project was undertaken.

Using material and examples collected from other continuation high schools in the state of California, the author did write and cause to have printed a brochure about the program at Del Paso High School (See

Appendix, Exhibit H). Copies of the brochure were sent to every administrator, staff room, and community club officer in the district. It has also become a part of the material provided for every student and parent upon enrollment at Del Paso High School.

EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS:

INTERNAL -- SYSTEM:

OTHER SCHOOLS/STAFF IN THE DISTRICT

The author did not attempt to devise a questionnaire to measure other staffs/schools knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the continuation education program in the Walnut Valley Unified School District. Two factors led to this decision. First, recognizing that direct experience was the best method of communicating and that it would be impossible to provide direct experience for all staff members, the data would not be valid. Second, to question those staff members who either visited the school or had direct contact with the school, it was assumed, would prejudice the data received.

It was concluded that informal feedback, unsolicited feedback, would be the best method of evaluating the

methods and overall effect. Again, a caution is necessary. The attempt was to begin the process of creating an ever increasing circle of people who were knowledgeable and understanding of the school and its program. What affect these people,, who became knowledgeable and understanding of Del Paso High School, would have upon others cannot be measured. How much they discussed their visit and their impressions with others is not known. It can only be assumed that if they had received positive feelings they could affect other's attitudes.

EVALUATION OF THE METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Since a formalized method of evaluating efforts at communicating with this particular public was not made, evaluation must be from the more informal means -- comments made by staff members, visitors, etc..

Individual, face-to-face

Staff members inform the author that their contacts with other staff members resulted in their receiving a better understanding of their schools and

other schools/staff receiving a better understanding of Del Paso High School. Other staff members expressed some surprise over the attractiveness of the facility, the learning materials prepared by the staff and the amount of effort the staff had put into these materials, and the general quietness and relaxed learning atmosphere of the school.

The author feels confident that visitors left with more knowledge and understanding of the educational program. If they discuss the program with other staff members at their particular schools with any degree of a positive attitude, it would be most helpful in creating the ambience that we desire.

Newsletters:

While the Newsletter was, for this public, a one-way communication technique, it is obvious that it was well received. Written notes (See Appendix, Exhibit I) were received from the Superintendent, two principals, two vice-principals of the comprehensive high school, and the secretary to the Assistant Superintendent -- Personnel. Two other principals commented orally on

the Newsletter, one mentioning that some community club officers at his school had made mention of the Newsletter to him and were favorably impressed.

The Vice-Principal for Attendance and Welfare at the comprehensive high school requested that extra copies be sent to him for distribution to department chairman and others on that staff. These people were added to our distribution list and were included in all subsequent distributions.

Appearance of Building:

The appearance of a school has great impact upon one's perception of that school. If one will stop to consider their immediate reactions to a school that appears distraught -- papers laying all over the campus, lawns unkempt, graffiti on the walls -- one can better understand the necessity for maintaining a clean and neat facility. That initial impact does tend to color one's perception of the educational program at that school.

Although located in an industrial site, the grounds of Del Paso are kept neat and clean. The

walls are free of graffiti. The inside of the building is colorful, warm, clean, and neat.

The author would suggest that there is two-way communication occurring because of the appearance of the facility -- a very subtle form of two-way communication. The school, its students and staff, is saying to the public that they are proud of their school and desirous of maintaining a good appearance. Publics coming to the school are not besieged by a negative atmosphere and are, thus, more receptive to the program.

Student Volunteers:

As was mentioned in Chapter Three, students are one of the prime agents of public relations and communications with the various publics. If one can move these students into roles that involve them with the other publics, and if the students exhibit a positive attitude, they can be very effective in developing the ambience that this practicum was attempting to achieve.

Although few students were actually involved and even though two of the students did not complete their

assignment, the comments received were all positive. One principal of an elementary school requested more student involvement during the 1976-1977 school year.

Two aspects must be mentioned in evaluating this effort at communication. First, we would not be receiving requests for student volunteers unless they were positive influences and positive public relation/communication agents for Del Paso High School. Secondly, because of their involvement and their direct contact with other staff members, they are communicating and informing these publics about Del Paso High School. Again, the communication effort is subtle.

Brochures:

The brochure developed was published too late in the year to be evaluated as a means of communicating. One can only hope that through the brochure and its format some of the questions people might have about the school will be answered.

INTERNAL -- SYSTEM

OTHER ADMINISTRATORS (COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL)

Del Paso High School takes the position that we do not try to compete with or question the effectiveness of the comprehensive high school. It is held that it is the cooperation between these two schools that determine the success of common educational goals. To maximize this philosophy it is necessary to communicate this feeling to the comprehensive high school and to have the comprehensive high school personnel comprehend the alternative educational program at Del Paso High School. With this understanding they would be able to better inform students of the opportunities available to them.

Therefore, it was determined to attempt to communicate more fully with selected administrators at the comprehensive high school.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Two methods of communication were identified for communicating with this "public". The two methods were 1) individual, face-to-face and 2) newsletters.

Individual, face-to-face:

The attempt was made to provide the assistant-principal and each of the vice-principals with the opportunity to visit Del Paso High School. Invitations were sent to each, suggesting a date and time for visitation. It was requested that they attempt to spend from two to three hours at the school. Each of the individuals invited did respond to the invitation.

After initial discussion with the principal to discuss the school and answer questions, the visitors were assigned to work with a teacher for the period of their visitation. It was felt that by working with a teacher and the students in that class, the visitors would receive the best and most realistic perspective of the school's program and method of operation. After the visitation period they were invited back to the principal's office to discuss any other questions that might have been raised because of the visit and to emphasize the concept that the visit invitation was an attempt to provide them with the opportunity to more fully understand the program in order to

better counsel students and parents.

In addition to this formalized attempt, each was invited to attend the various functions at Del Paso High School -- art shows, Open House, Back-to-School nights, Chili Dinner. A few did attend these events during the year.

Newsletters:

Copies of all Newsletters were sent to the administrators at the comprehensive high school along with any other printed information. The Newsletter was, for this public, intended to provide information.

EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS:

INTERNAL -- SYSTEM:

OTHER ADMINISTRATORS (COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL)

As with the other internal -- system public, a formalized method of evaluation was not attempted. The author must then rely on other means of evaluation. The Vice-Principal for Attendance and Welfare was the prime source of information regarding the communication efforts made with this particular public.

It is his opinion that the visitations to the school were beneficial and that efforts should be continued, including in succeeding years the counseling staff and department chairman. It is his feeling, and one with which the author concurs, that such visitations would tend to increase the cooperation between the schools and benefit the students. He was disappointed that the other administrators did not express the enthusiasm for the program at Del Paso High School that he had. He does feel that each visitor did receive a much more comprehensive understanding through the visitations than they would have through printed material.

One administrator, the Assistant Principal, did write a note commenting on his visitation (See Appendix, Exhibit J). He also commented on the Newsletter. The comments were most positive. The Newsletter resulted in another note from a vice-principal at the high school. However, it is most difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of this means of communication.

SUMMARY

This chapter has been concerned with communications with two publics within the classification of "internal publics -- system". The two audiences were 1) other schools/staffs in the district and, 2) other administrators (particularly those administrators at the comprehensive high school). The effort, as with all communications efforts in this project, was to begin to develop an ever increasing number of people well informed and understanding of the program of continuation education in the district.

The chapter discussed the various methods used to communicate, evaluated each and the overall effort. Evaluation leads to the conclusion that the efforts were moderately successful.

Chapter Five

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS -- PARENTS

INTRODUCTION

If schools intend to meet the difficulties besetting them now and those that will confront them throughout the rest of this decade, they will need to give far greater attention to the task of informing the public. Not only will it be important to tell the public about the schools, but it will be incumbent on the schools to listen to the views of the public and to take constructive steps to meet justified criticism.

Most schools need to establish a fresh dialogue between themselves and parents for the sake of educational improvement. Communications must flow not only from the school to the home, but also from the home

to the school. One method of providing for communication from the home to the school is through the use of parent questionnaires.

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE SCHOOL

In December, 1975, a questionnaire (See Appendix, Exhibit K) was developed and mailed to the parents of all students enrolled in Del Paso High School. A follow-up mailing was done in January. At the time of administration there were 97 students enrolled from 94 parental pairs. A total of 34 responses were received, 36.1%.

Results of Questionnaire:

The purposes of the questionnaire were: 1) to identify the parents' attitude toward the learning environment of the school; 2) to identify those things about the school that parents felt were real "strengths"; and 3) to identify concerns the parents had about the school. Four questions attempted to ascertain the parents' perception of student learning and progress. The first question asked:

In general, do you feel your child has a more positive attitude toward school since attending Del Paso High School? (CHECK ONE)

_____ YES
_____ NO
_____ UNCERTAIN

The parents indicated that they felt their child had a more positive attitude toward school since attendance at Del Paso High School. Of the 34 respondents, 29 (85.3%) felt the student demonstrated a more positive attitude, 8.9% (3) replied "NO", and two parents (6%) were uncertain.

The second question asked:

In general, do you feel that Del Paso High School has been able to help your child?
(CHECK ONE)

_____ YES
_____ NO
_____ UNCERTAIN

76% of the respondents replied in the affirmative. Only one parent (2.9%) replied negatively, while

seven parents (21%) were uncertain.

Two other questions were asked in this regard.

The first question asked parents to rate the achievement of their child at his previous school. The second question asked the parents to rate the achievement of the child at Del Paso High School. The questions were:

How well was your child doing in school before attending Del Paso High School? (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ a. Very well
- ☐ b. Average
- ☐ c. Below average

How do you feel your child is doing at Del Paso High School? (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ a. Better than before
- ☐ b. About the same
- ☐ c. Below average

Seventy-six percent of the parents (26) indicated that the student was accomplishing below average prior to attending Del Paso High School. Three parents (9%) suggested achievement at an average level and five parents (15%) marked "very well". In comparison,

since enrollment at Del Paso High School, 76% of the parents indicated that the student was doing better than before, 24% felt the student was doing about the same. Not one parent suggested that the student had decreased in his learning.

Another portion of the questionnaire asked the parents, in an open-ended question, to list those things they liked best about Del Paso High School. They were asked to include those things they felt were its greatest strengths. Twelve items were mentioned. These are listed below in rank order with the number of times that response was mentioned indicated in parentheses.

1. Staff -- their attitudes and relationships with students (19)
2. Personalized, individualized instruction (9)
3. Students feeling of success (4)
4. Emphasis on learning (3)
5. Small class size (3)
6. Relaxed atmosphere (3)
7. Personal guidance (2)
8. Emphasis on fundamentals (1)
9. Token economy (1)

10. Sensible rules (1)
11. Policy on attendance (1)
12. Credit production policy (1)

Two questions were included to identify areas of concern. The first question asked the parents to identify things they would like to see changed. The second asked the parents to list things they would like to see "happen" at Del Paso High School in the future.

Specifically, the first question asked:

List the things about Del Paso High School which you would like to have changed. Include the things which you feel are its chief weaknesses.

The parents listed six different items. Again, these are listed below in rank order with the number of times the item was mentioned indicated in the parentheses.

1. Increased hours of attendance (6)
2. Stricter requirements for earning credits (3)
3. Immaturity of some students (2)

4. Need for physical activity schedule (1)
5. Need for a better public image (1)
6. Different structure, class periods (1)

The second question asked; "What would you like to see happen in your child's school in the future?"

The responses were:

1. Additional vocational elective courses (10)
2. Food service -- P.M. session (1)
3. Keep the school small (1)
4. More financial support from Board (1)
5. Optional physical fitness class (1)
6. School pictures (1)
7. Different structure, class periods (1)
8. Reading improvement emphasis (1)

Messages to be Communicated:

The conception of a communication program, made explicit throughout this report, is that of stating opinions and listening to opinions. The questionnaire was an attempt to determine the parents' general attitude toward and concerns about the school.

The concerns parents had about the school were of significance. Of the responses identifying concerns, four dealt with the structure of the school -- vocational classes, longer hours of attendance, class periods. Eleven parents of the 34 responding (32.4%) suggested some form of structural change. This concern was one that needed to be amplified and clarified.

Three parents were concerned about the requirements for earning credits. The intimation was that credits were, in a sense, "handed-out" rather than earned. It would be necessary to do a better job of informing the parents about the requirements for earning credits and the concept of mastery learning.

Objectives of Communication Efforts:

During staff meetings, after reviewing the data received, two objectives for the communication efforts were adopted. These were:

1. By June 1, 1976, 75% of the parents responding to a questionnaire will indicate that they have a more positive attitude toward the school.

2. By June 1, 1976, the staff of Del Paso High School will have resolved at least one of the major concerns identified by the parents to the satisfaction of the parents as measured through informal feedback and/or a written questionnaire.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Mention communication and most people immediately picture newspapers, radio, and television. These media are indispensable for inexpensive mass communication. But they cannot be relied upon, solely, to do the whole job. While the news media are the communication grandstanders, they are not necessarily the most effective.

Discussion and prioritization efforts with staff identified a number of methods of communication considered to be most effective in communicating with parents. Each method is described below.

Individual, face-to-face:

There are many communication methods, but, perhaps, nothing is more effective than individual, one-to-one, face-to-face communication with its immediate feedback. Among the methods used to communicate individually with

parents were attitudes of students, parent conferences, and the "intake interview".

Attitude of Students

Parents appreciate the interest teachers take in their children. The teacher who sends home a happy youngster is the profession's number one public relations person.

Chapter Three described the attitudes of students toward the school. On all measurements of attitude toward school, the students indicated an extremely positive feeling (See pages 41-43, 66-71). Parents, in general, have a positive view of the job Del Paso High School is doing with their children. High percentages of the parents responded affirmatively in response to the series of questions dealing with their attitude toward the school. Assuming the research of Gallup and others is correct, the attitude parents have toward the school is a correlate of the student's attitude and perceptions. Thus, by reinforcing and maintaining student attitudes toward the school, Del Paso High School is developing a more positive attitude toward the school on the part of parents.

Each staff member, as a part of individual evaluation objectives, undertook to contact 75% of their parents at least once during the school year. Such contacts would be via telephone calls, home calls, or conferences at school. Each teacher accomplished their objective. Many parents were contacted more than once.

The school communication program is greatly assisted whenever teachers can visit home or make personal phone calls to parents. And such contacts should be made not only when something is "wrong". Complimentary calls and notes go a long way toward building good will.

The effect of such contacts is to make the parent a partner in the education of the child.

Gallup found that teachers ranked third, along with the school board, as a source of information about the schools for the general public. To parents, the author assumes, teachers rank second after their children. Continued contact with teachers would reinforce the attitude that the teachers care, are concerned, and truly are dedicated to the education of their children.

Del Paso High School is a receiving school. Students, labeled, in most cases, as "divergent" are transferred to the continuation program at any time of the year. Parents need to understand the reasons for such transfer and to recognize and understand the advantages of the program for their child at that particular time in his/her life.

The "Intake Interview", made mandatory for enrollment, is one method of accomplishing a number of tasks -- the primary one being the development of an understanding and acceptance of continuation education as the best educational program for the child.

This interview, lasting 30-45 minutes, involves the parent(s), child, and school principal. The interview attempts to explore the nature of the problem resulting in transfer from the perspective of the child and the parent, outline the procedures and standards of the school, and answer questions that any party might have concerning the school. A short tour of the campus and introduction to the teaching staff is included.

Parents are given the opportunity to view the school, meet the staff, and explore the program first-

hand -- direct experience. They are encouraged to establish and maintain close contact with the school. The result of such interviews has been, in the vast majority of cases, an improved attitude on the part of parents toward the school.

Progress Reports:

As suggested in Chapter Three, the progress reports are a means of communicating the messages of progress, performance, and praise to the students. The same messages are transmitted to parents through this method.

Built into the progress report form was a method for handling an assumption made by the author and accepted by the teaching staff. The assumption is that parents are concerned not only with the "level of achievement" -- often indicated by letter grades -- but are more concerned with what is learned. The progress reports utilized by Del Paso High School emphasize the what is learned.

This was conceived to signal to the parent an additional message -- priority. The priority of Del

Paso High School is on learning and the demonstration of learning. The report form can also be considered a method of handling the concern about the requirements for earning credits.

The frequency of reporting is of significance. The report forms are mailed to the parents at the end of each week. Parents are then able to track the students rate of progress and determine if the student is using the school correctly.

Newsletters:

Beginning in February, 1976, a Newsletter was published and mailed to parents each month, excluding June. The concepts behind the Newsletter were to inform the parents about the programs, problems, plans, and policies of Del Paso High School; to report to the parents on the results of questionnaires and the effect of their opinions on the programs, plans, and priorities of the school; and to raise new questions for their consideration.

The Newsletters were conceived, then, as one means of two-way communication.

To illustrate, the first issue of the Newsletter, February 9, 1976 (See Appendix, Exhibit L), contained an article reporting to the parents the results of the parent questionnaire that had been administered in December and January. It listed the two items that the questionnaire had identified as the major concerns of the parents and suggested what steps would be taken.

As one reviews the Newsletters (See Appendix, Exhibit L), it is apparent that each contains a report on a questionnaire or activity, many contain a questionnaire to be answered by the parents in response to the report. Actions taken because of parental input, through questionnaires and discussion groups, is reported.

The effect was to include the parents, to make the education of their children and the educational program of the school a cooperative effort between the school and the parent.

Telephone:

The telephone can be one of the more significant methods of communicating with parents. Its use, or misuse, can have a significant impact upon the parents'

attitude and acceptance of the school.

Telephone Manners

The person most parents first meet and contact at the school is the school secretary. Her telephone demeanor can have either a positive or negative impact upon parents. A curt, unresponsive, "what-da-ya-want" attitude can destroy a parents desire to feel good about a school. A friendly, empathetic manner can ease a situation and have the effect of improving the parents' image of the school.

An unreturned phone call by a teacher or administrator has negative effects upon parents. It was emphasized by the school principal to the staff that all telephone calls were to be returned the same day. The secretary was directed to state at what time the teacher would be able to return the call, inquire where the parent could be reached at that time, and to ascertain the nature of the call. The same was true of telephone calls for the school principal.

Telephone Conferences

It was further emphasized with the staff that problems were best handled by face-to-face parent conferences. However, if such a conference could not be arranged, they were to telephone parents to discuss problems. Perhaps even more important, teachers were requested to telephone parents to provide them with positive reports.

The author holds the bias that schools too often contact parents only to report problems. School contacts become something that parents dread -- the telephone call from the teacher is often answered with the question "What did he do wrong now?"

Parents need and deserve to know the positive things the students do. The notes given to students and often shared with parents were one way of emphasizing the positive. Another was for the teacher to call the parents and relate the positive.

Invitations

The telephone is a convenient tool for extending personal invitations to parents for conferences. Open-

House, and exhibits. This personal contact by the teacher is most successful in obtaining good attendance at school functions. For the school's "Back-to-School" nights, the staff contacted every parent at least twice by telephone -- once two weeks before the event and once more a day before. The effect was to have the school realize a parent attendance of 85%. The personal invitation extended by the teacher to the parent, in the judgement of the author, was the prime reason for the successful turn-out of parents.

Attendance

One of the major reasons a student is transferred to Del Paso High School is truancy. One of the parents major concerns is the school attendance of their child. One of the parents major complaints about the comprehensive high school is the lack of communication regarding attendance. The parents statements to the author have been to the effect that they do not have knowledge about truanies until the child has been dropped from class or consideration is being given to transfer to Del Paso High School.

Del Paso High School contacts the parents of each absent student daily. Parents are urged and requested to telephone if their child is going to be absent, but if they do not, the school telephones them. Parents always have knowledge of absences and truancies. Through this method our concern for the education and welfare of their child is transmitted.

In discussions with parents concerning the school, this contact concerning attendance is often mentioned as one of the outstanding features of the school.

Advisory Groups:

The PTA, or its equivalent, is a major focal point for parent contact with the school. If one, however, looks at attendance at meetings and membership, it is apparent that each decrease with the advancement of the child through the grade levels.

At the high school level, though such an organization may exist, the number of members is insignificant in comparison to the total possible members. Attendance at meetings is small. Its impact may often be

diminished by the existence of special interest groups concerned with activities such as sports, music, and drama.

It is the author's belief that while a group such as a PTA would be good, involvement by parents can best be accomplished through special task forces. For this first year's efforts, we involved parents in three special task groups: 1) Educational Specifications Committee; 2) fund-raising dinner organization, and 3) recreational activities.

The Educational Specifications Committee was a group consisting of parents, students, and staff advised by the district architect. Charged with the task of developing the specifications for a permanent, new facility for Del Paso High School, the group met a number of times between April and June of 1976. The committee visited a number of other continuation high schools in the Los Angeles, Orange County metropolitan area and provided the input the architect needed to prepare the drawings for a new school. This group also approved the drawings and plans prior to their presentation to the Board of Education.

The committee had a major impact on setting the priorities for the continued growth and development of the educational program at Del Paso High School. It was able to impact upon the plans -- other than structural -- for the school. This group, especially the parent members, were involved in meaningful two-way communication.

A major effort was made by a volunteer group of parents to plan the "Second Annual Chili Dinner" at Del Paso High School. Six parents planned this event with the principal and the student Advisory Council. The students were charged with serving, ticket sales, setting and cleaning tables. The parents were charged with preparation and organization. Every parent in the school was contacted by this task group of parents and asked to contribute either a salad or desert. Every parent thus contacted was responsive. This group of parents also contacted a number of businesses in the community and were responsible for having donated over twenty different door prizes. The event, itself, was financially successful. It was also successful as a communication device to the parents and the community.

A small group of parents was contacted and volunteered to help at recreational events. Their primary function was to provide transportation and supervision. Through this type of involvement -- again direct experience -- they were able to experience the school, its students, and its program.

Open House/Back-to-School Nights:

Open House and Back-to-School nights provide parents with the opportunity to visit the school, to view the materials used by students in the learning process, to meet the student's teachers, and to hear a little about the classes the student is taking. What they don't do is involve the parent in the learning process so that the parent can experience and understand more fully what actually occurs during a typical school day.

In March, 1976, Del Paso High School attempted two unique Back-to-School nights. Having two separate sessions each day involving two separate sets of students, it was necessary to plan two evenings. On one day the regular morning session was cancelled and the students

required to attend school that evening. Two days later the afternoon session was cancelled and that group of students required to attend school in the evening. On both evenings the parents were requested to attend with their child. District administrators and Board of Education members were also invited to attend.

After a short welcome and detailing of the procedures for the evening by the principal, the parents and students, together, attended classes as if it were a regular school day. The parents worked alongside their child on the same school work. Students whose parents were unable to attend were asked to work with a district administrator or Board of Education member.

For, perhaps, the first time the parents were able to experience what their child was experiencing daily. They were able to observe and evaluate, first-hand, the work their child was doing and the learning that he/she was accomplishing. They were able to make judgements about the level of work the student was doing. For many of the parents, district

administrators, and Board of Education members this was an eye-opening experience.

In a very subtle manner a number of messages were being transmitted to the parents and others present. The messages transmitted were 1) performance of their child, 2) progress of their child, and 3) priorities for their child. Also, as the evaluation of the evening indicates, they began to understand better the total educational program of the school.

The last half-hour of the evening was devoted to group discussion, led by the classroom teachers, about the school. The discussion in each classroom involved the parents, district administrators, Board of Education members, and students. The discussion revolved around two main topics -- "What is the school doing right?" and "Where do changes need to be made?" The discussions were interesting. Reinforcement of philosophy, practices, and procedures was received. Clarification of a major concern of the parents -- hours of attendance -- was also received allowing the staff to better plan the process of change.

The Back-to-School nights provided a structure for real, beneficial two-way communication. Both subtle and direct, concrete communication techniques were used. Evaluation of this method, to be discussed later in this chapter, indicates the success of the evenings activities.

Brochures/Reports:

A brochure was developed using materials and examples collected from other continuation high schools in the state of California. Copies of the brochure were sent to every parent along with the May issue of the Newsletter. The brochure provided answers for the ten most commonly asked questions about continuation education (See Appendix, Exhibit H).

The brochure was also provided to every student and parent considering enrollment at Del Paso High School. Every parent received a copy at the time of the "Intake Interview".

Student Publications:

During the 1975-1976 school year, Del Paso High

School did not publish a student newspaper or booklet of writings.

Letters:

The writing of letters is generally a means of one-way communication. However, the effort to communicate can establish an atmosphere that paves the way for two-way communication.

Staff members often wrote letters to parents commenting on the student's progress and complimenting the student's performance. One teacher, in particular, wrote letters to the parents of each of her students at the beginning of each semester and at the end of the school year. She attempted to report to the parents of each of her students at the beginning of each semester and at the end of the school year. She attempted to report to the parents the program devised for the student, provided information on ability level and skill achievement, and reported progress and performance. The effect of such effort was to signal to the parents her concern for the students and her concern for the parents knowledge of the school program devised for that student.

Observation indicates that she received more telephone calls and visitations from parents during the school year than did the other teachers. At the two Back-to-School nights she had a higher percentage of her parents in attendance than did the other staff members.

The author suggests that the efforts to communicate through the use of staff-written letters to parents -- generally considered a method of one-way communication -- signals to the parents the teacher's desire for close cooperation and communication. Parents, given that attitude on the part of the teacher, will respond and two-way communication is established.

Appearance of Building:

The term "continuation high school" invokes within many an image of a school for drop-outs, dopers, and problem students. Perhaps to many people and parents, the image of how the school should appear is congruent to their image of the students.

The appearance of the facility is important in changing attitudes. As mentioned previously, Del Paso

High School has striven to maintain a clean campus.

The author is convinced that one of the most significant methods of beginning the process of changing attitudes and bringing about understanding and acceptance is to bring people -- parents -- to the campus and to view the facility. The attractiveness of the facility attests to the fact that the school district views the educational program in a most positive manner and that the staff and students care about the school -- both its structures and its program.

Media:

The media were used by Del Paso High School to provide information to the parents and public concerning programs, plans, and progress. Discussion of the use of the media will occur in Chapter Six.

EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION EFFORTS WITH PARENTS

The overall goal of this practicum was to create an ever increasing circle of people who are well informed about the school. It is to create an ambiance -- an environment of knowledge and understanding.

Parents rank second to students as a source of information for the general public about the schools. Parents have entrusted their two prize possessions -- their children and their money -- to school officials, and they want to know what's being done with them. It is imperative that parents have and exhibit a positive attitude toward the schools. The communications program at Del Paso High School was conceived as a method of fostering that attitude and creating the ambiance desired.

Obtaining Evaluation Data:

In June, 1976, a questionnaire (See Appendix, Exhibit M) was mailed to all parents of students enrolled in Del Paso High School. Among the purposes of the questionnaire was an attempt to measure the attitude of parents toward the school. Along with this questionnaire, surveys at the "Back-to-School" nights and questionnaires included in the Newsletter provide evaluative data.

Results of the Communication Effort:

The first objective established for the communications program with parents was:

By June 1, 1976, 75% of the parents responding to a questionnaire will indicate they have a more positive attitude toward the school.

The June, 1976, questionnaire included questions to measure the accomplishment of this objective and to ascertain the most significant methods of developing this attitude. The first question asked:

In general, has your attitude toward Del Paso High School become more positive or less positive since your student's enrollment? (CIRCLE ONE)

MORE positive

LESS positive

Of the responses received (12), every parent (100%) indicated that their attitude had become more positive.

In an attempt to understand what brought about a change in attitude, an open-end question was asked: "To what would you attribute the change in attitude?" Of

the twelve responses received, the answers can be grouped into three categories: 1) student attitude; 2) staff and their relationships with students; and 3) communications. Eight respondents (56.6%) mentioned students and student attitude as the cause for their change in attitude. Among the comments were:

"My son _____ has really enjoyed all of school better at Del Paso. His attitude is 100 per cent better." (sic)

"Having my daughter enrolled there. I learned the function of the school, rather than 'hear-say' from others." (sic)

"My son has become more positive."

Three respondents (25%) indicated that their change in attitude was a result of the teachers, their attitudes and relationships with the students. The comments were:

"He says the teachers really help you and like you and that is what it is all about."

"The personalized attention and caring of the staff really makes an impression on me."

"The personal concern and individual attention offered by the faculty."

Two respondents (16.6%) responded that communications

helped cause change in their attitude toward the school. The item mentioned as an example by both parents was the progress report.

From the responses received, it is apparent that the objective was met -- technically. However, the data is extremely tenuous. Although any response to a survey is of some benefit, decreasing reliance must be placed on the responses as fewer persons respond. For instance, a 75 per cent response usually is more indicative of the genuine opinions of the audience polled than a 25 per cent response.

The response to the questionnaire mailed to the parents in June of 1976 was very small. Only twelve responses were received from a parent listing of 87 parental pairs. This is only 13.4% of the parents. The author attributes the lack of response to the timing of the questionnaire. The mailing occurred immediately after the close of school. Parents, it is suggested, may have been on vacation and, upon return, failed to respond because of the time since receipt. Also, parents may have been on a "mental" vacation -- school was over for the year and their "duties" as parents

took on a new role, one more distant from the school. Perhaps, if the mailing had occurred earlier more responses would have been received.

Other data is available to evaluate the accomplishment of the stated objective. At the March, 1976, Back-to-School nights a questionnaire developed by the author was responded to by the parents in attendance. (See Appendix, Exhibit N) Two questions were directed to the concept of parental attitude toward the school. The first question asked:

Prior to tonight, how would you characterize your attitude about the concept of continuation education?

- _____ Very positive
- _____ Positive
- _____ Uncertain
- _____ Negative
- _____ Very negative

In March there were 103 students enrolled at Del Paso High School. For the Back-to-School nights 94 students were in attendance with 87 of the students having at least one parent in attendance (84.3%). Of

these parents, 34.4% (30) characterized their attitude as very positive, 27.5% (24) as positive, 28.7% (25) as uncertain, 5.7% (5) as negative, and 1.14% (1) as very negative. 54 parents (61.9%) categorized their attitude as positive, 25 (28.7%) were uncertain, and six (6.8%) characterized their attitude as negative. To ascertain whether or not the evening's activities had any effect on attitude, the following question was asked.

If tonight's experience caused any change in your attitude, how would you characterize that change? (IF NO CHANGE IN ATTITUDE, DO NOT ANSWER)

_____ More Positive

_____ More Negative

Every parent responding (57) indicated that their attitude had become more positive. 65.5% of the parents indicated an attitude change.

The data collected at the March Back-to-School nights and through the June questionnaire leads to the conclusion that attitude change did occur. The data is tenuous in regards to meeting the objective. However,

it is clear that what change did occur was in the positive direction.

The second objective of the communication effort with parents was:

By June 1, 1976, the staff of Del Paso High School will have resolved at least one of the major concerns identified by the parents to the satisfaction of the parents as measured through informal feedback and/or a written questionnaire.

The parents had expressed a desire in the initial questionnaire administered in December and January for some form of change in scheduling. This was made more evident and clarified during discussions at Back-to-School nights in March. The discussion in March made evident that 1) the parents wanted the student to have the opportunity to remain in school for more than the required three hours and 2) that they wanted to have elective classes specifically taught.

During March and April, the staff of Del Paso High School investigated a number of scheduling/structure alternatives. Each was discussed with the Student Advisory Council. In early April a schedule was tentatively

adopted by the staff and students. This schedule was described and listed in the April Newsletter to the parents. As part of that Newsletter a questionnaire was mailed to all parents.

Returns of the questionnnaire were minimal with only five parents responding. All responded favorably. Technically, again, the objective was met.

EVALUATION OF THE METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Each method of communicating with the public needs to be evaluated to determine its effectiveness and to ascertain means of improving that method. Each of the methods utilized will be evaluated below. Most evaluation statements are based upon observation and informal feedback rather than the more formal, questionnaire technique.

Individual, face-to-face:

Individual, face-to-face communication is probably the most effective method of communication. Opinions can be expressed, feed-back immediately received, and impressions drawn. Probably the most

significant agent of face-to-face communications with parents is the student.

The data presented in this report indicates that the students' attitude toward Del Paso High School is very positive. The data also suggests that the student's attitude is the most effective method of developing and/or reinforcing a parent's positive attitude toward the school. The June parent questionnaire indicated that 66.6% of the parents attributed their change of attitude toward the school to the student's positive attitude.

Conferences with teachers and the Intake Interview are also effective face-to-face communication techniques. The parents suggested in the June questionnaire that the staff's concern and relationships with students were also a cause of their changing attitudes. Such concern can be brought to the parents' attention through the student and through contact with the staff. It is necessary that the staff continue to make efforts to contact parents directly.

Progress Reports:

A third reason identified by parents in the June

questionnaire for their changing attitude was communication. The progress report was mentioned as an example of the communications they appreciated. This type and frequency of reporting is one the parents want continued.

Mailed weekly, the report was an attempt to keep the parent informed of the progress and performance of the student. In the June questionnaire a question was included to determine parental preference in frequency of reporting. The question was:

The Progress Reports we send out upon the earning of a credit are another way of keeping you informed of your student's progress. Would you prefer: (CHECK ONE)

- ☐ A. Continuing the mailing of Progress Reports weekly.
- ☐ B. A monthly summary of credits earned and learning demonstrated rather than the weekly report.
- ☐ C. A quarterly summary of credits.
- ☐ D. Instituting parent-teacher conferences to be held each quarter during the school day with students being dismissed early on the day of the conference.

Of the respondents, seven (58.3%) indicated that they desired a continuance of the weekly mailing of

reports. Four (33.3%) desired a monthly report, while one parent considered a quarterly report to be adequate. What is apparent is that the parents desire a continuance of the process and manner of reporting and consider this an important communication method.

Newsletters:

The Newsletter was a new method of communication instituted as a direct result of this practicum. It is one way of discussing programs, priorities, problems, and announcing events. In the June questionnaire a question was included to ascertain items the parents would like to have included in the 1976-77 school year's Newsletters. The question asked was:

The NEWSLETTER is ONE of the major means of communicating with you about the school program, special activities, and future plans. Which of the following would you like to have discussed in the NEWSLETTERS next year?

(CHECK ONE OR MORE)

- ☐ A. Other educational opportunities (Adult Ed., ROP, work experience).
- ☐ B. The concept of individualized learning and self-pacing.
- ☐ C. Grading policy.

- _____ D. Career education
- _____ E. Articles on the teaching staff and their backgrounds.
- _____ F. Other _____

The responses indicated that the parents were interested in discussion of all the suggested topics -- each having been checked at least once. Eight parents checked B -- the concept of individualized learning and self-pacing. Five checked E -- articles on the teaching staff and their background -- and five also checked A -- other educational opportunities. The first Newsletter of the 1976-1977 school year (See Appendix, Exhibit O) contains an article on other educational opportunities and an article on a member of the teaching staff. In other editions during the school year the other "issues" will be discussed.

It can be suggested that the author should have included a question concerning the value of the Newsletter as a communication device. One was not included, however. The author's view is that such a device is a necessary part of the total communication program.

Telephone:

The telephone is one of the most important communication devices available in our society. Its use or misuse can have significant impact upon attitudes. However, to evaluate the impact of this method in bringing about a greater understanding and acceptance of the school is difficult and can only be done indirectly.

It is evident from the discussion that the telephone calls inviting the parents to attend the "Back to-School" nights were successful in generating a "high" turnout of parents. The activities of the evening and the direct exposure to the school and its program then generated a changing attitude toward greater understanding and acceptance.

The telephone calls made by teachers in reporting progress and conferencing with parents, it can be suggested, also were effective in causing a changing attitude. The faculty was able to demonstrate to the parents their concern for the student. As the data indicates, this concern for students was listed as the greatest "strength" of Del Paso High School.

Advisory Groups:

Direct experience with the school has been shown to be the best method of bringing about greater understanding and acceptance of the school. During the time-span of the practicum, eighteen parents were involved in the three different Advisory Groups. Each had the opportunity to view the school and its program. Each was involved. The author is of the belief that involvement, brings about responsibility and that with responsibility comes the effort to bring about success. Involvement, responsibility, and concern for success draws the parents into the school more and more.

Open House/Back-to-School Nights:

One of the most successful methods of communicating with parents were the "Back-to-School" nights in March of 1976. There are a number of ways of measuring the success of this method -- the number of parents involved and the results of a questionnaire administered during the evenings.

In March, there were 103 students enrolled at Del Paso High School. For the "Back-to-School" nights, 94

students were in attendance. 87 of these students had at least one parent attend, 84.3%. Contrast that attendance with what is the usual attendance at such activities in an elementary school or the comprehensive high school.

The last activity for the evening was for the parents to respond to a questionnaire. The purpose of the "Back-to-School" night was to provide the parents with a first-hand knowledge of the school and its program. To measure the effectiveness of this approach, the following question was asked:

The purpose of this OPEN HOUSE was to provide you, the parents, with a more realistic concept of the learning achieved by your children, the type and level of work undertaken, and the operation of Del Paso High School. In general, have we been successful?

_____ YES

_____ NO

100% of the parents, board members, and district administrators in attendance replied in the affirmative. Among the comments made were:

"I feel it was a good opportunity to see the students at work and to observe the interaction with teachers."

"Excellent. Favorable impressed in all areas."

"I would like to see more of the community aware of what the school does."

The evenings' activities were successful in bringing about a more positive attitude toward Del Paso High School. With a greater understanding of the process and procedures at the school the parents demonstrated a greater acceptance. Data detailed on page 129 indicates that 65.5% of the parents had an attitude change as a result of the "Back-to-School" nights. Of these 57 parents, all (100%) commented that their attitude had become more positive.

Other Methods of Communication:

Of the other methods of communication described in this chapter, there is not enough evidence to indicate the degree of effectiveness. Some of the methods were not completed in adequate time to have any effect, others have been evaluated in other chapters in regards to other publics.

SUMMARY

Attitudes about the quality of local schools are based upon information gained from many sources. Parents of students rank second as a source of information. The more parents are involved in the school, the more they will understand and support the school program.

This chapter details communication efforts with parents. From information gathered through a questionnaire, objectives were established for the communication program. A number of methods were utilized and evaluated.

Evaluation of the communication efforts with parents indicates that the objectives were achieved. Parents indicated an improved, more positive attitude toward Del Paso High School. Necessary changes were identified and the change implemented.

Chapter Six

COMMUNICATIONS WITH OTHER PUBLICS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this practicum report has been to describe the development and implementation of a communications program at Del Paso High School, Walnut Valley Unified School District, Walnut, California. A framework identifying various "publics" was located and adopted, methods of communication identified, messages listed, and methods of obtaining feedback and evaluation suggested. Through prioritization efforts, it was decided to concentrate on certain publics in the first year of implementation. These efforts with the selected publics have been described and evaluated.

Certain publics were concentrated on. However,

the other publics were not ignored or excluded from communication efforts. The purpose of this chapter is to describe a selected few examples of communication efforts with other publics. The description will center on certain events which had communication/public relations effects.

RADIO PROGRAM -- KGBS

That the continuation education program is a little understood educational alternative has been suggested numerous times in this report. It has also been suggested and documented that continuation educators have done little to foster the awareness and understanding that builds confidence within the public toward that program. One method of reaching the many publics is through the mass media -- radio, television, newspapers.

Although the mass media may not be as effective a method of communication as direct experience, to ignore that method would be a mistake.

On Thursday, January 22, 1976, two students, two teachers, and the principal of Del Paso High,

School took part in taping an hour long radio program. The program, entitled "Insight", was broadcast over KGBS radio (an NBC affiliate in Los Angeles, California) on Sunday, January 25, 1976.

The purposes of the program, focusing on the example of Del Paso High School, were to make the public aware of the purposes of the continuation education programs in the state, how the continuation program differs from the traditional, comprehensive high school program, and, hopefully, alter the general image held by the public.

It would be impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in altering opinions or to determine the number of the listening public. For certain publics within the Walnut Valley Unified School District, tape recordings of the program were made and sent to individuals. The Superintendent and members of the Board of Education all received tape recordings.

For these individuals, two messages were transmitted. First, the message that Del Paso High School had been recognized as an outstanding example of the

continuation education "movement" -- praise -- and, secondly, what the program and priorities of Del Paso High School were. (A cassette tape recording of the radio program is included in the Appendix, Exhibit O)

CHRISTMAS PARTY AT PACIFIC STATE HOSPITAL

On Thursday, December 18, 1976, the students at Del Paso High School sponsored a party for students at Pacific State Hospital in Pomona, California.

For the three days prior to the party the students were involved in making gifts to be taken to Pacific State Hospital -- wooden toys and stuffed animals. The event was highly successful and appreciated by the students and staff at the hospital (See Appendix, Exhibit P).

This event provided for communication with an external agency (Pacific State Hospital) and various business people in the community. In order to obtain the materials necessary for the manufacture of the toys, the students of Del Paso High School went into the community to request donations and explain the

project they had undertaken. Business people were able to meet our students, were able to recognize that student from a "continuation" high school were involved in a worthwhile event, and, perhaps, received a new perspective on the students and program of a continuation high school.

ART SALES

During the 1975-1976 school year, the students in the art classes, with the supervision of their teacher, held two art shows/sales. The art sales were held at two local shopping centers.

In these instances, Del Paso High School went into the community. Examples of student art work -- ceramics, jewelry, leather craft, batik, drawings and paintings -- were sold. In each instance over \$100.00 profit was realized.

These events allowed for the communication of a number of messages. First, the public was made aware of a program at Del Paso High School -- the art program. Secondly, many people who didn't know of the

school ow of continuation education were given the opportunity to ask questions of the students and/or the teachers present. Students and teachers were given the opportunity to explain the program, policies, and performance of Del Paso High School.

SUMMARY

The three events described and discussed above are provided as examples of other activities that had communication/public relations effects in the community. There were numerous other activities that could also be mentioned, however the purpose of this short chapter was to indicate that many avenues of communication with many publics were explored and utilized. Even though efforts were concentrated on as selected few publics, other publics were not excluded or ignored.

Chapter Seven

DISSEMINATION OF THE MODEL: COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

This practicum's prime purpose was to design, implement, evaluate, and institutionalize a two-way communications program at Del Paso High School. A secondary purpose was to provide help to other continuation high schools in the state of California in developing and/or improving their communications programs through dissemination of the model and various techniques of communication. Three assumption were made.

1. That most continuation education programs in the state of California did not have a planned program of communications/public relations.

2. That continuation education administrators did wish to improve their public knowledge and understanding of the continuation education program.
3. That a "Handbook of Communication Techniques" would be of use to these administrators in developing and improving their communications program.

Data collected as part of this practicum substantiated these assumptions.

VERIFICATION OF ASSUMPTIONS

In response to a questionnaire developed by the author and administered to all continuation high school administrators in the state of California, 68.2% (71) of the respondents (104) indicated that their schools did not have a planned, on-going program of public relations. Only 4.8% (5) felt that the continuation education program in their district would not benefit by a planned program of public relations, while 74.3% (77) felt that benefits would be derived.

The concept that this endeavor could have significant impact on other, similar schools is well accepted. Eighty-one and seven tenths percent (85)

of the respondents to the questionnaire felt that the concept the project addressed would benefit continuation education. Only 2.8% (3) felt that the concept would not be beneficial.

32.6% (33) of the respondents indicated that their schools did have a planned, on-going program of public relations. The question was then asked:

" . . . Rate your public relations program. Considering the number ten (10) signifies a very successful program and the number one (1) a not so successful program, CIRCLE the number which "rates" your public relations program.

Not so										
Successful				Moderately			Very			
				Successful			Successful			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Table 7.1, below, provides data regarding this self-rating of the public relations program.

Table 7.1
SELF-RATING OF PROGRAM
(n=31)*

S E L F R A T I N G S C A L E		Number	Percentage
	1		
	2		
	3	3	9.6%
	4	3	9.6%
	5	9	29%
	6	2	6.4%
	7	3	9.6%
	8	3	9.6%
	9	4	12.9%
	10	4	12.9%

*Two of the respondents indicating they had an on going public relations program did not respond to the rating-scale question.

There are many variables which might help explain the reasons for some schools rating their programs as highly successful while others rate their programs lower. The questionnaire did not attempt to ascertain the reasons. One explanatory hypothesis was that the effort expended -- measured in terms of the total number of publics communicated with -- would determine the success of a public relations/communica-

tions program. Table 7.2. provides data which tends to substantiate this working hypothesis.

The table indicates that those respondents who rated their efforts as "very successful" tended to make more effort to communicate with the total range of publics than did those who rated their programs as less successful. At the lower end of the scale, 16 publics were communicated with while at the upper end of the scale 22 of the publics were included.

The data is not offered as substantiation of the hypothesis. There exist too many other variables to make such a conclusion and the questionnaire did not attempt to measure the quality, quantity, regularity, and other such factors. The data is offered only as a suggestion for a tentative conclusion.

TABLE 7.2

167

SELF-RATING AND
COMMUNICATION EFFORT
(n=31)

	Self-Rating									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1-Students			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2-Faculty			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3-Staff			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
4-Central Administration			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5-Other schools in dist.			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
6-Feeder school cluster			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
7-School related agencies			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
8-Private schools & colgs.					x			x	x	x
9-Other administrators			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
10-Prof. organizations			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
11-PTA				x	x	x	x	x	x	x
12-Dad's/Mom's Club					x		x			
13-Newcomers			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
14-Others							x			
15-Senior citizens								x	x	
16-Community leaders			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
17-Business leaders				x	x	x	x	x	x	x
18-Ministers								x	x	x
19-Attorneys									x	x
20-Doctors								x	x	x
21-Others										
22-Dropouts			x	x	x		x	x	x	x
23-Graduates			x		x	x	x	x	x	x
24-Community Agencies & organizations			x	x	x	x	x		x	x
25-Civic & Service grp.			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
26-News media			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
27-Other										

DISSEMINATION PROCEDURE

The questionnaire utilized attempted to measure whether or not continuation education programs throughout the state of California had planned communications programs, the success of these programs, and whether or not the respondents felt the concept of the project would be beneficial. Another purpose of the questionnaire was to gather ideas for the communications program at Del Paso High School -- ideas which could then be shared with other continuation administrators. Many ideas and samples of communication efforts were received and utilized in some form by Del Paso High School.

From this collection of ideas and materials and the reading and research of the author, a mimeographed book entitled Communication Techniques (See Appendix, Exhibit Q) was prepared. The book attempted to persuade the readers of the need for improved communication, inform them of a workable framework for developing of their own program, and suggest a multiplicity of different techniques which could be utilized. The work was sent to every continuation high school administrator in the state of California.

EVALUATION

In the practicum proposal it was suggested that evaluation of this aspect of the practicum would be via a questionnaire in which 50% of the respondents would find the model useful and adapt sections to be used in their schools. It was necessary to alter the evaluation techniques.

Factors Requiring Alteration of Evaluation Techniques:

The author was unable to maintain the time-line he had established for completion of this aspect of the practicum. Rather than completing the book in April as was intended, the book was not completed until late May. Many schools in the state were closed for the summer or in the process of closing. Many administrators were already on vacation or would be going on vacation shortly. These factors necessitated the change in evaluation technique.

Establishment of a "Panel of Experts":

A panel of five experts was established to review the book and assess the effects of the book in

their own schools and statewide. The panel was carefully chosen. Each member of the panel had or did serve as a district or state officer of the California Continuation Education Association. It was assumed that through their leadership roles they knew the "mind" of the continuation educators in their region and state. Secondly, they were chosen from different geographical regions of the state. The panel consisted of:

Mr. George Sorenson, Principal
Argonaut High School
Past President, California Continuation
Education Association
Member, California Advisory Committee
on Continuation Education

Mr. Ron Dever, Principal
Atascadero High School
President, District V, C.C.E.A.
Atascadero, California

Mr. Richard J. Kuester, Principal
Abraham Lincoln High School
Past President, District X, C.C.E.A.
Member, California Advisory Committee
on Continuation Education
4341 Victoria Avenue
Riverside, California

Mr. Sam J. Muscolino, Principal
Williamson High School
Chairman, California Advisory Committee
on Continuation Education

Mr. Robert Hoffman, Principal
Jereann Bowman High School
President, District VII, C.C.E.A.
Member, California Advisory Committee
on Continuation Education

Evaluation of "Communication Techniques":

Each member of the "Panel of Experts" was personally contacted to request their services on this panel. A follow-up letter and some suggested areas to consider in their review was mailed to each member of the panel. It was emphasized that the five (5) open-ended questions were to be guidelines only in their critique and that they were to feel free to comment on anything and in any form (See Appendix, Exhibit R). Either the respondents felt constrained by the suggested questions or felt that the questions were adequate for a general critique for they all chose to follow the format of the questions.

Copies of the responses of the panel are included in the Appendix, Exhibit R. In regards to question number one. "Are the 'arguments' made in Chapters I and II convincing?", all members of the panel felt that they were. Mr Muscolino wrote:

As for number one argument made in 1 and 2, people in the area of continuation education should read and re-read and study and absorb the information stated, particularly in this day and age where money is short. School districts are beginning to cut, scrounge, and

police our budgets; therefore, it is important that communications be upgraded and magnified over all the school district, community, state and legislature.

In regards to the second question asked, "Is the framework useful as an analytic tool for identifying the publics?", the respondents were again all in agreement that it was. Mr. Ron Dever stated that ". . . this was helpful information and covered some publics that may otherwise be overlooked." Mr. Richard Kuester found the framework to be ". . . well organized and satisfactory."

The two key questions asked were (1) "Is there one idea (or more) within the listing of ideas that you anticipate using next year?", and (2) "What do you think the effects of this book will be -- in your operation and statewide?" The first of these two questions was an attempt to see if the members of this panel were affected by the book. The second question required their judgement as to the total effectiveness, statewide.

In regards to the first of these two key questions, only two of the members of the panel indicated that they

would use ideas incorporated in the book. Two of the panel members suggested that the listing of ideas was good, but that they could not, at the time, say whether or not they would use them. The fifth respondent wrote: "I'm not sure that I will use any of the ideas you present, but I will certainly use the book as a resource for planning change and improvement in our school." Three of the five respondents evidently found the totality of ideas and suggestions to be of help to them.

The second of the two key questions asked the respondents to judge the effect of the book in their own operation and statewide. Among the comments were:

I really believe we can make some improvements with the help of your information. My staff is dedicated to our school and enthusiastic in trying to improve the image of the school for the benefit of our students.

On a statewide basis I think some good things are happening and if only a couple ideas from your book are initiated in our schools there is bound to be some attitude changes toward continuation.

I believe your book will be well received and used throughout the state by schools that wish to upgrade their standing and offering to students.

Would be very good in our operation and statewide.

Four of the five members of the panel indicated that the effect of the book could be substantial. The fifth panel member did not react directly to the question. Either he misunderstood the point of the question or simply chose not to respond to the point. His comment was a terse "Good start -- needs conclusion, etc.."

SUMMARY

The author has been active in the continuation education "community" since his first experience with this unique educational program. Observation of other school and discussions with other administrators made obvious the need for improved communication skills and efforts. The book, Communication Techniques, was an attempt to provide help to other administrators in the state in developing and improving their communications program.

Evaluation of the effort is encouraging. The "Panel of Experts" indicated that the book could have impact and could be a point-of-departure for other administrators. The unknown factor is the willingness of others to change.

The book, it was hoped, would have effect statewide. It must also be stated that the book serves another purpose. The placing of the ideas into a syllabus form assures that the communication efforts of Del Paso High School will be continued and improved on. The multiplicity of ideas and methods received as part of the project, and included in the book, provided a "shopping list" of ideas for Del Paso High School, many of which were used in the first year of a planned communications program.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this practicum was to develop, implement, and evaluate a two-way communication program for Del Paso High School, Walnut Valley Unified School District, Walnut, California. The overall goal was to create an ever increasing circle of people well informed about the school -- an ambiance, an environment of knowledge and understanding.

The need for such a program was made apparent through the literature on education, observation, and experience. The literature makes explicit a crisis of public confidence in the nation's schools. Research by Gallup and the Field Research Corporation

indicates a continued decline in public confidence. The author, serving as principal of Del Paso High School (Continuation) and having been involved in continuation education for nine years, has experienced and observed the misunderstanding and non-acceptance the public has of this unique, alternative educational program and the effect this has upon staff, students, and parents.

Communication -- two-way communication -- was conceptualized as a solution to the problem. Research indicates that the more the public knows -- first-hand -- about the schools the more positive is their attitude and the more confident is the public about the educational program.

The author's concern is shared by most other continuation education administrators. Data collected indicates that most continuation high schools did not have a planned program of communications and that the solution proposed was accepted by almost three-fourths of the respondents to a questionnaire. Perceiving that the author's experience in developing and implementing a communication program could benefit

other continuation education administrators, a second purpose of this practicum was to disseminate the model developed and communication techniques to other, similar high schools in the state of California.

PROCESS REVIEW

Before attempting to communicate any piece of information, it is necessary to analyze with whom it is one wishes to communicate, the methods of communication, the messages to be communicated, and how to obtain feedback on and evaluate the communication efforts. A framework, the result of a workshop on public relation attended by school administrators in the Dallas Independent School District, was adopted and adapted to guide the staff of Del Paso High School in their communication program.

Chapter Two of this report details that framework. Offered also is a process for adapting that framework to the needs of the local school and/or school district. Prioritization efforts, following the "Delphi" technique identified those "publics", within categories, for Del Paso High School to

concentrate communication efforts on. The same process helped identify the methods considered most beneficial in communicating with these publics.

The overall goal -- again -- of this practicum was to create an ever increasing circle of people well informed about the school. It was the bias of the author and his staff that it would be more beneficial to concentrate on a limited number of publics during the first year of the communication program and increase the number and range of efforts with each succeeding year. For the first year, it was decided to make efforts to communicate with three "internal publics" -- students, other schools and staffs in the district, and other administrators at the comprehensive high school -- and one "external public" -- parents. This decision was based upon research findings and perceived need.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five detail communication efforts with these publics. Questionnaires, observation, and informal feedback were used to obtain information about these publics' knowledge and understanding of the school. The data collected

provided the information needed to guide the communication process. Specific objectives were established for communication efforts with each public.

Within each chapter is a description of the communication methods and an evaluation of the various methods with the particular public. The total effect of the communication program with each public is also evaluated. Using questionnaires, observation, and informal feedback, data is presented to indicate whether the established objectives were accomplished or not.

The Appendix is replete with samples of questionnaires and written communication efforts. Such questionnaires and models, adapted by other school, would provide the bases for beginning a communication program in that school or school district.

A framework for communication was identified, adopted, and adapted by Del Paso High School. A process for adapting was described. The program was implemented and both the methods of communication and effect of the communication efforts with each public

evaluated. Information gathering methods and devices were developed for the particular program at Del Paso High School but could be used by those replicating. The practicum report spells out the process.

IMPROVEMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

This practicum addressed the problem of developing an ever increasing circle of people well informed, aware, and understanding of the educational program at Del Paso High School. The process chosen to accomplish this task was communications -- two-way communications. The author can suggest and demonstrate that there has been significant short-term change as a result of the practicum effort and that the possibility exists for significant long-term change.

Short-Term Change:

The process of communication -- two-way communication -- requires that the school not only provide information but listen to the concerns of the public. Because of the program significant change has occurred in 1) parent and student attitudes toward the school,

2) class schedules, 3) activity scheduling, 4) staff commitment to the program, and 5) recognition of other communication needs.

Parent and Student Attitudes

Chapters Three and Five have described the communication efforts made with parents and students. Evaluation of these efforts indicate that both "publics" demonstrated an improved, more positive attitude toward the school because of the communication program.

Improved attitude toward school on the part of students can have numerous effects. Among these effects, it can be suggested, is improved attendance. As Table 8.1, page 183, indicates, there was a significant growth in the percentage of average daily attendance (ADA) compared to previous years. The figures for 1975-1976 show an increase of almost four percent. The previous year's change was less than one percent.

Improved attitude on the part of parents can also have many effects upon the educational system.

Willingness to become involved in task oriented groups, volunteering of time to act as teacher's aides, etc., can be used to measure changes in the educational system because of the program. It is too early in the 1976-1977 school year to evaluate change in this direction.

Table 8.1

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
AS A PERCENTAGE OF MONTHLY ENROLLMENT

School Month	School Year	1973	1974	1975	1976
		1974	1975	1976	1977
1		83.2%	82.2%	86.9%	88.3%
2		77.2	75.5	81.0	
3		86.1	80.3	85.5	
4		83.5	77.4	89.8	
5		81.0	87.3	87.2	
6		86.8	81.8	79.3	
7		74.8	80.9	82.5	
8		77.3	76.5	86.3	
9		73.5	85.9	81.4	
10		76.4	81.1	81.4	
Average for School Year		79.9%	80.8%	84.1%	

Class Schedule

Because of the communication program, a desire of the parents was recognized and acted upon. Their prime concern was for students to have the opportunity to attend more than the required 180 minutes per day. This desire was acted upon and change implemented for the 1976-1977 school year. The schedule was published in the Newsletter, a questionnaire reacted to, and finally adopted in May, 1976 (See Appendix, Exhibit L).

Activity Schedule

An activity schedule, desired by the students, was devised for the 1975-1976 school year. Evaluation of that schedule indicated that it would be necessary to make revisions for the 1976-1977 school year.

The principal is presently meeting with the student Advisory Council to devise a schedule for the 1976-1977 school year. This schedule, not yet completed, will be discussed in each classroom, modifications made if necessary, and adopted.

Staff Commitment

One of the most significant changes observed as a result of this practicum has been the attitude of the staff toward the educational program and the communication process. The staff had always felt that the educational program at Del Paso High School was far superior to other continuation high schools and that the philosophy and methods utilized were something to be proud of. As a result of their involvement in the communication process, they became even more convinced and committed to the educational program of Del Paso High School. They feel that the school has much to offer and that people do need to be made more aware. Therefore, they have become even more committed to continuing the communication program and to expanding it.

Staff meetings during orientation week of the 1976-1977 school year saw the staff, once again, choosing public relations/communications as an objective for the entire staff to work on (See Appendix, Exhibit S). This is evidence of their commitment to the educational and communication program.

Recognition of Other Communication Needs

As Change occurs and as one becomes more involved in the communications process, the need for other communication devices becomes more apparent. Because of the changing schedule it was necessary to develop a registration booklet (See Appendix, Exhibit T). It also became apparent that our student handbook was in need of revision. Therefore a new handbook was written (See Appendix, Exhibit U)

Long-Term Change:

The concept of this practicum was to begin the process of bringing about greater understanding and acceptance of the continuation education program in the Walnut Valley Unified School District. It is impossible to measure the effect upon the community, and the various publics making up the community, at this early date in the program. It can only be suggested that the possibility for significant, community wide change does exist.

As more students graduate from the school and

enter the community as young, working adults, their attitudes and support of the school will begin to have an effect upon the total community. As more and more parents experience the school, recognize the success of their children in the school, and gain greater confidence in the school, their attitudes will permeate the community. The process for change is long, but the possibility exists for developing a strong alumni of students and parents strongly supportive of Del Paso High School which can significantly affect the attitudes of the community.

FURTHER APPLICATIONS OF THE PROGRAM

As has been suggested earlier in this report, a communication program has to be a "do-it-yourself" program. It cannot be duplicated in cookie-cutter fashion.

Dissemination of the framework and methods of communication occurred through the writing of a booklet entitled "Communication Techniques". This mimeographed booklet was distributed to every continuation high school in the state of California.

How effective the book will be is suggested in Chapter Seven. The prime variable determining its usefulness is the willingness and desire of other administrators to really involve themselves in developing a program.

The author has received a letter from a principal in northern California expressing thanks for the book and the effect the book has had upon her and her school (See Appendix, Exhibit V).

The model is one that can be adapted readily by any school or school district. It has worked at Del Paso High School and the expansion of that program continues.

OBSERVERS OF THE PRACTICUM

The author requested that the practicum be observed by three individuals. The three observers were:

Dr. David L. Brown, Superintendent
Walnut Valley Unified School District
Walnut, California

Mr. Jack W. Jolley, Assistant Superintendent
Educational Programs and Services
Walnut Valley Unified School District
Walnut, California

Dr. Calvin Burke, President
California Continuation Education Association
Director of Continuation Education
Los Angeles Unified School District
Los Angeles, California

Letters concerning their observations and
evaluation of the practicum are included on the
following pages of this report.



Walnut Valley Unified School District

190

476 South Lemon Road, Walnut, California • (714) 595-1261 • David L. Brown, Ed.D., Superintendent

October 8, 1976

Dr. S. O. Kaylin
Director of Practicums
Nova University
College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314

Dear Dr. Kaylin:

It has been my pleasure to observe over the past months the enthusiasm and effort which Mr. Richard Stevens has invested in his program with Nova University. It has not been a surprise to me in any way. Steve is one of our young, vigorous administrators who approaches his assignment in this district as part of our management team with similar investment of enthusiasm and effort.

Among several aspects of his program which Steve has shared with me and solicited my direct involvement has been the practicum focusing on communications. I have watched this work in process in a variety of ways. Staff meeting agendas and minutes from Del Paso go regularly across my desk keeping me tuned to the various efforts of staff that are reported in the practicum report. I have taken part in a number of the activities designed to attract parents and others so that they might hear and be heard. I receive regularly the student newsletter which contains evidence of the efforts of an ongoing communication process.

I have also had the opportunity to review the practicum report and make comments and suggestions. I found it relatively unnecessary to provide much input because Steve had done a good job in preparing the draft.

In my opinion, Steve has produced a fine piece of work. It is a sound plan for an effective communications effort. More importantly, it is a plan that he is attempting to implement in his school. I am convinced that his efforts along the lines of the system he describes have had a definite, beneficial effect on the school, its staff and students, and on a better understanding of that school and its program among residents of this community.



Walnut Valley Unified School District

191

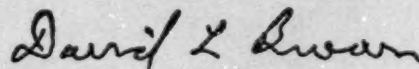
476 South Lemon Road, Walnut, California • (714) 595-1261 • David L. Brown, Ed.D., Superintendent
Dr. S. O. Raylin
Director of Practicums

-2-

October 8, 1976

I am pleased to endorse this particular effort which Steve has mounted and commend the process which produced a product with continuing and future promise.

Sincerely,



David L. Brown, Ed.D.
Superintendent

DLB:ier



Walnut Valley Unified School District

476 South Lemon Road, Walnut, California • (714) 595-1261 • David L. Brown, Ed.D., Superintendent

October 18, 1976

192

Dr. S. O. Kaylin
Director of Practicums
Nova University
College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314

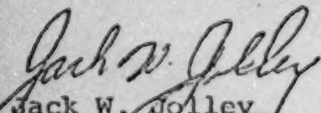
Dear Dr. Kaylin:

I observed Richard Stevens during the time work was being accomplished for Nova University. All of his written efforts came to me for review and suggestions. In my opinion, his work was excellent. He is able to approach a problem, systematically organize it into components, deal with each area, and then develop alternative solutions. I was also well satisfied with his ability to write and his expression of ideas.

The practicum has been reviewed by me. I had the opportunity to make recommendations concerning the chapters. Generally, Mr. Stevens did very well in developing the project. His topic is vital in the educational world today. I feel he has developed a model which will be of significant value to other educators.

I would recommend Mr. Stevens be given every consideration towards the completion of his degree.

Sincerely,



Jack W. Jolley
Assistant Superintendent
Educational Programs and Services

JWJ:em

Los Angeles City Unified School District

CONTINUATION EDUCATION OFFICE

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES: 450 NORTH GRAND AVENUE, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

MAILING ADDRESS: BOX 3307, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90051

(213) 625-6440

WILLIAM J. JOHNSTON
Superintendent of Schools

ROBERT W. LAMSON
Assistant Superintendent
Instructional Planning Division

193

October 13, 1976

Dr. S. O. Kaylin
Director of Practicums
Nova University
College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33314

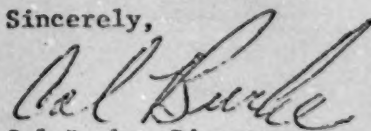
Dear Dr. Kaylin:

I have observed the work being done by Mr. Richard Stevens of Del Paso High School. I must say that I am most pleased with Mr. Stevens' efforts. Not only is he involved in a project that is vitally important to continuation education but also the quality of work is outstanding. In reviewing the practicum report, I was particularly pleased with the many aspects that readily lend themselves to adaptation by other continuation school administrators.

It has been a pleasure to be associated with Mr. Stevens and to give whatever support I was able to.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this worthwhile venture.

Sincerely,



Cal Burke, Director
Continuation Education

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "A Communications Plan for Your School." Dallas Independent School District. (August, 1970). Mimeograph
- Bagin, Donald, Grazian, Frank, and Harrison, Charles H.. School Communications: Ideas That Work. Chicago: Nation's Schools Press, 1972.
- California School Boards. Volume 33, No. 5 (May, 1974).
- Dubia, Dorothy E.. "Develping Goals, Planning, and Implementing a Positive PR Program." Thrust Burlingame, California: Association of California School Administrators, 1973: Volume 3, No. 1 (October, 1973).
- Education Update. Public Information Office, Los Angeles County Superintendent of School (July 3, 1975).
- Elam, Stanley. "Attitude Formation, Direct Experience Best." NASSP Bulletin. Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1974. Volume 58, No. 378 (January, 1974).
- Gallup, George H.. "Public Attitudes Toward Education." The Education Digest. Volume LXI, No. 7 (March, 1976).
- Gelms, Kenneth J.. "Gearing Up for Effective PR." NASSP Bulletin. Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1974. Volume 58, No. 378 (January, 1974).
- Havighurst, R.J. and Stiles, L.J.. "National Policy for Alienated Youth." The Phi Delta Kappan (April, 1961).

Kirschenbaum, Howard, et. al.. Wad-Ja-Get? The Grading Game in American Education. New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1971.

Olds, Robert. "The Principal's PR Role." NAASP Bulletin. Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1974. Volume 58, No. 378 (January, 1974).